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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. ANDREW FULLER,

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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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THE

NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF WALKING BY FAITH.

SERMON I.

[Preached before the Northamptonshire Association, held at Nottingham, June 2, 1784.]

2 Cor. v. 7.—We walk by faith, not by sight.

MUCH is said, concerning faith, in the holy scriptures, especially in the New Testament; and great stress is laid upon it, especially by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This, I apprehend, is not very difficult to be accounted for. Ever since the fall of man, we have been entirely dependent on the mercy of God, through a Mediator. We all lie at his discretion, and are beholden to his mere sovereign grace for all the happiness we enjoy. We have nothing on which we can rely for the possession or continuance of any good, but the word and will of God. The only life, therefore, proper for a fallen creature in our world, is a life of faith; to be constantly sensible of our dependence upon God, continually going to him, and receiving all from him, for the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Believers, and they only, are brought to be of a spirit suitable to such a kind of life. The hearts of all others are too full of pride and self-sufficiency; but these are contented to be pensioners on the bounty of another, can willingly commit their all into Christ's hands, and venture their present and everlasting concerns upon his word. *The just shall live by faith.*

Self-renunciation, and *confidence in another*, are ideas which seem ever to accompany that of faith. The Apostle speaks of being

justified by faith; that is, not by our own righteousnes, but by the righteousness of another: of *living* by faith; that is, not by our own earnings so to speak, but by the generosity of another: of *standing* by faith; that is, not upon our own legs, as we should say, but upon those of another: and, here, of *walking* by faith; which is as much as if he had said, 'We walk, not trusting our own eyes, but the eyes of another: we are blind, and cannot guide ourselves; we must, therefore, rely upon God, for direction and instruction.' This, my brethren, is the life we must live, while in this world, and this the manner in which we must walk in our progress toward the heavenly state. Great is the wisdom and goodness of God in so ordering it; great glory hereby redounds to him, and great good accrues to us.

All I shall attempt will be, to *explain the* NATURE, *and show the* IMPORTANCE, *of the Christian's walk by faith.* Both are necessary, the one, that we may form just ideas of what we have to do; and the other, that we may feel our hearts excited to do it. O may the same SPIRIT who indited the sacred passage breathe upon us that these ends may be accomplished!

I. Let us inquire, WHAT IS INTENDED by the sacred writer, when he says, *We walk by faith, not by sight.* Faith and sight, it is easy to see, here stand opposed: as, indeed, they do in many other parts of scripture; especially in that remarkable definition of faith, wherein the Apostle to the Hebrews calls it *the evidence of things not seen.* But what kind of sight it is opposed to, may deserve our attentive inquiry.

And here before I proceed any farther, in order to make the way clear, I will advert to a notion which has been too generally received, but which appears, to me, unscriptural and pernicious: what I refer to is, that faith is to be considered as opposed to spiritual sight, or spiritual discernment. It is true, I never heard of any person, either in preaching, writing or conversation, who said so in express words; but expressions are often used, which convey the same idea. When the terms faith and sense are used, it is common with many, to understand, by the latter, *sensible communion with God.* So it is common to hear a life of faith opposed to a life of frames and feelings. Those times in which we have

the most spiritual *discernment* of God's glory, sensible communion with him, and feel our love most ardently drawn out to him, are thought to have the least of the exercise of faith. It is common to say, 'There is no need for faith then; at those times we live by sense: but that, when all our graces seem dead, and we can see no evidence from whence to draw the favourable conclusion, then is the time to walk by faith." The meaning is, then is the time to believe all is well, and so rest easy, whether we have evidence that it is so, or not.

Thus we have often heard several passages of scripture applied, or rather miserably misapplied; for instance, that in the last chapter of Habakkuk: *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* As if, by the fig-tree not blossoming, &c. was meant the Christian graces not being in exercise; and that then was the time to walk by faith, to rejoice in the God of our salvation! That passage also concerning Abraham, *who, against hope, believed in hope*, has been understood, as if to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, like Abraham, was to maintain an unshaken persuasion of the goodness of our state, whether we have evidence, or no evidence.

So also that passage, in the fiftieth of Isaiah, has been frequently brought for this purpose: *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* As though a state of darkness, there, meant a state of mind wherein a person could discern no evidence whatever of his being a good man; and as though such were there encouraged to make themselves easy, and leave the matter with God, not doubting the goodness of their state. Our Lord's rebuke to Thomas has been understood in the same manner: *Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* As if a blessing should rest upon those, who, destitute of all discernible evidence of their Christianity, nevertheless believe it with an unshaken confidence. If this is to

walk by faith, then faith must stand opposed to *spiritual sight*, or *spiritual discernment*.

I doubt not but there is such a thing as to live upon frames: which ought to be guarded against. If I imagine, for instance, that God changes as I change; that he admires me at one time, and not another; or that his great love, from whence all my hope of salvation springs, rises and falls according to the state of my mind; this is, doubtless to dishonour God, as it strikes at the immutability of his love. So, if I derive my chief consolation from reflecting upon what I am, instead of reflecting upon what Christ is, this is to dishonour Christ, and may, very properly, stand opposed to living by faith. But this is not the common idea of living upon frames. It has been usual, with many, to account that man to live upon frames, who, when he is stupid and dark and carnal, cannot be confident about the safety of his state; and him to live by faith who can maintain his confidence in the worst of frames. Allow me, brethren, to offer three or four plain reasons against this notion of the subject.

1. Faith is the only means of spiritual discernment and communion with God; and, therefore, cannot be opposed to them. Our best frames are those in which faith is most in exercise; and our worst, when it is the least. Faith is the eye of the mind. It is that by which we realize invisible and spiritual objects, and so have fellowship with God. Yes, it is by this grace that we *behold the glory of the Lord*, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the *Spirit of the Lord*.

2. If faith is opposed to spiritual discernment and communion with God, then it must work alone; it must never act in conjunction with any of those graces wherein we feel our hearts go out to God; for this would be to confound faith and sense together. But this is contrary to fact. When we have most faith in exercise, we have most love, most hope, most joy; and so of all the graces: all sweetly act in harmony. Thus the scriptures represent it as ever accompanied by other graces; especially by love purity, and lowliness of heart. It is expressly said to *work by love;* and, it should seem never works without it. It is also said to *purify the heart*. The exercise of faith, therefore, and the ex-

ercise of holiness, can never be separated. Equally true is it, that it is ever attended with *lowliness of heart*. There are two instances of faith recorded, which our Lord particularly commended, saying, he had not seen such great faith, no not in Israel: the one was the case of the woman of Canaan, and the other of the Roman centurion; and both these were attended with great humility. The one was contented to be treated as a dog, and the other thought himself unworthy that Christ should come under his roof. A confidence unaccompanied with these, if it may be called faith at all, seems nearly to resemble what the Apostle James called *faith without works;* which he pronounced to be dead BEING ALONE.

3. If faith is to be understood in this sense, then it not only works without, but *contrary to* other graces. The scriptures encourage a spirit of self-examination and godly jealousy. These are modest and upright graces, and constitute much of the beauty of Christianity. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;* say the inspired writers: *try your ownselves!—Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.—Let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.* But always to be confident of the safety of our state, let the work of sanctification go on as it may, is not only unfriendly to such a spirit, but subversive of it. Hence, it is common, with some, to call every degree of godly jealousy by the name of *unbelief*, and to impute it to *the enemy;* yea, to shun it, and cry out against it, as if it were itself a devil! This is not the most favourable symptom of an honest heart. Surely an heart truly upright would not wish to receive comfort itself, but upon solid evidence: and where it was taught to call such a fear by the name of unbelief, I know not; I think I may say, it never came from the word of God. If the veracity of God were called in question, no doubt it would be unbelief; but the question, at those times, with a sincere mind, is, not whether God will prove faithful in saving those that trust in him, but, whether he be indeed the subject of that trust. His doubts do not respect God, but himself. Love and fear are the two great springs and guardians of right action. When love is in exercise we do not stand in need of fear to stimulate or guide us

but, when we are not constrained by the former, it is well to be restrained by the latter.

4. Faith, in that case, must be *unsupported by evidence.* God's word affords us no warrant to conclude ourselves interested in his promises, and so in a state of safety, unless we bear the characters to which the promises are made. We have no right, for instance to apply to ourselves that promise, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,* unless we bear the character of the party there addressed. This is expressed in the foregoing verse, *But thou Israel art* MY SERVANT, &c. If, from the real desire of our hearts, we yield not ourselves servants to God, no impression of this passage upon our minds can warrant us to conclude, that God is indeed our God, or that we shall be strengthened, helped, or upholden by him. So also no man has any right to conclude himself interested in that promise, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee,* unless he be so drawn from the love of sin, self, and the world, as to love God better than any of them. But, if we are to hold fast the confidence of our safety, whatever be the condition of our mind, or the evils in our conduct, then we are, in that instance, to believe without evidence. If the work of sanctification be the only spiritual evidence of our interest in Christ, then, in proportion to that work increasing or declining, our evidence must be strong or weak. When we degenerate into carnality and indifference, it must, of course, diminish. To say, then, that those are the times in which we exercise most faith is the same as to say we exercise most faith when we have least evidence; and consequently, it must be a kind of faith, if it be faith at all, that is unsupported by evidence.*

* All true faith must have TRUTH for its foundation. That faith to which the scriptures promise salvation, is founded upon evidence; and that evidence is the TESTIMONY of God. Hence it is, with great propriety by the Apostle, defined, *the belief of the truth.* This definition includes more than many seem to apprehend. To believe the truth in reality, is cordially to credit the account which God has given of himself, of us, of sin, of Christ, of earth, of heaven, &c. Whoever thus realizes divine truth must, of necessity, feel its influence. The same Apostle tells us, that those who receive the

There are but two cases, that I recollect in the whole system of true Christian experience, which so much as seems to resemble this notion; and these are in fact, essentially different from it. One is, that of *the most eminent Christians having a general and*

word *as it is*, find it *effectually* to work in them. Hence we are said to be *sanctified through the truth*, to know the truth, and to be made free by it. I cannot believe God to be that amiable and gracious being which his word represents him to be, without loving him. I cannot believe myself to be that vile and worthless being that God represents me to be, without abhorring myself in dust and ashes. If I really credit what God hath said of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is impossible but that I should hate it, and perceive its dreadful demerit, and plainly see myself righteously condemned for being a subject of it. If I really believe the record that God has given of his son, that is the same thing as to think of his excellencies, in measure as God thinks of them; and, in that case, I cannot but embrace him with all my heart, and venture my everlasting all upon his atonement. If from my heart, I believe what God hath said of the vanity of this world, and the substantial bliss of that to come; if I realize the emptiness of all the enjoyments of the former, and the eternal weight of glory pertaining to the latter; I shall necessarily labour, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.

If this be a just notion of faith, then it will follow, 1. *That all unconverted men are truly, and in the most literal and proper sense of the word* UNBELIEVERS. Whatever they may pretend, they do not realize what God has revealed of his character or their own, of the nature of sin and its dreadful demerit, of the excellence of Christ, of the vanity of this world, and the solid bliss of the next. Nor can this their unbelief be removed but by their becoming entirely new creatures, by a work of the Almighty spirit of God. 2. *That a mere cold assent to things, commonly called believing the doctrines of the gospel, unaccompanied with love to them, or a dependence on Christ for salvation, is very far from being true saving faith.* Let but the doctrines of the gospel be really and heartily believed, *as God has revealed them*, and as before said, it will be impossible but that we should feel a determination to venture upon Christ alone for salvation, with all the proper effects of living faith. But persons may *profess* to believe those doctrines when they do not, or may believe them *partially*, but not as God has revealed them. Yea, a person may think these his professions to be true, and these his notions to be just, and yet be an infidel at heart. The Jews professed to believe Moses, and, no doubt, verily thought they did; but our Lord told them, *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.* We are under a necessity, therefore of concluding, that, where these effects are not produced, the faith of such persons is, in a great degree, *pretended*, and not real: and in that degree in which it is real, it is very *superficial*; it reaches only to the shell of truth

well-grounded persuasion of their interest in Christ, even at such times wherein they may not experience those evident and sensible exercises of grace which they do at other times. But then it is to be observed, grace has more ways than one of being in exercise: the grace of love for instance; sometimes, it is exercised in the most tender and affectionate feelings of the heart towards Christ, longing to be with him, and to enjoy him in the world to come; at other times, it works more in a way of serving him, and promoting his interest in the present world. This latter may not so sensibly strike the person himself, as being an exercise of love; but, perhaps, other people may consider it superior evidence.

The industrious peasant, sitting in his evening chair, sees his children gathering around him, and courting his affections by an hundred little winning ways. He looks, and smiles, and loves. The next day he returns to his labour, and cheerfully bears the burden of the day, in order to provide for these his little ones, and promote their interest. During his day's labour, he may not feel his love operate in such sensible emotions as he did the evening before. Nay, he may be so attentive to other things, as not immediately to have them in his thoughts. What then? he loves his children: indeed, he gives proof of it, by cheerfully enduring the toils of labour, and willingly denying himself of many a comfort that they might share their part; and were he to hear of their being injured or afflicted, he would quickly feel the returns of

at farthest. The essence and glory of the gospel is by them, neither discerned nor believed. 3. *That all that confidence which is unsupported by evidence, held fast by so many, is not faith; but presumption, or delusion.* If faith is the belief of the truth, then whatever I believe ought to be a truth, and a truth supported by evidence, prior to, and independently of, my believing it. This is certainly the case respecting the excellency and all-sufficiency of Christ. He is what he is, whether I believe it, or not. However I may disallow him, he is chosen of God, and precious. Whatever real excellence I at any time, discern or believe to be in him, I only believe the truth, and what would have been the truth if I had never believed it. Faith, therefore, draws aside the vail, and discovers things, in some measure, *as they are.* So, if that persuasion which I may have of my interest in Christ have any right to the name of faith, it must be a truth, and a truth capable of being proved by scripture evidence at the time.

glowing affection, in as strong, and perhaps stronger, emotions than ever.

Thus the believer may have real love to God in exercise, exciting him to a cheerful and habitual discharge of duty, and a careful watch against evil, and yet feel little, or none, of that desirable tenderness of heart which, at other times, he experiences. He has grace in exercise, only it does not work in the same way as it does at some other times; and he in general enjoys a conscious satisfaction, that the more he knows of God, his holy law, and glorious gospel, the more he loves them. During this, he may have an abiding satisfaction that things are right with him. But this is a very different thing from a person, at all events, maintaining the safety of his state; yea, and reckoning himself, in so doing, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, while carnality governs his spirit, and folly debases his conversation.

The other case is, when, on a failure of evidence, from a reflection on *past* experiences, the believer has recourse to an *immediate application* to the Lord Jesus Christ, casting himself directly on his mercy, and relying on his word; seeing he has said, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* This case, no doubt, often occurs. The believer, through the prevalence of carnality, with some other causes, too often finds his evidences for glory so obscured, that past experiences will afford but small consolation. At such a time, his mind is either easy, and carnally disposed; in that case, a few painful fears will do him no harm: or else his heart is depressed with perplexity and gloom; in that case, nothing is better than immediately to go to Christ, as a poor sinner, for salvation. This is the shortest, and it is commonly the surest way. It is not best, in such a state of mind, to stand disputing, whether we have believed, or not: be that as it may, the door of mercy is still open, and the Redeemer still says, *Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out.* It is best, therefore, to make a fresh venture of our souls upon him; that, if we have never before trusted in him, we may now.

This is no more than he has a *warrant*, at any time, to do, let things be as they may with him: for, though internal qualifications are necessary to our concluding ourselves *interested in* Christ, yet

it is not so in respect of *application* to him. The perplexed soul need not stay, before he ventures, to inquire whether he be fit to come to Christ. It is not required that he should prove his saintship before he applies for mercy, though it is, before he claims an interest in gospel-blessings. All that is necessary here is, that he be sensible of his being a vile and lost sinner: and *that* is not to be considered as a *qualification, giving him a right to come*, but as a state of mind *essential to the act itself of coming*.

Many a Christian has found sweet rest to his soul by such a direct application to Christ; and surely it would be much better for Christians who go almost all their life in painful perplexity, lest they should be mistaken at last, if instead of perpetually poring on past experiences, they were to practice more in this way. This would furnish them with present evidence, which is much the best and what God best approves; for he loves to have us continue to exercise our graces, and not barely to remember that we have exercised them sometime or other, heretofore. This, in some sort, may be called walking by faith, and not by sight; and, in this case, faith may, in some sense, be opposed to spiritual sight. It is opposed to that discernment which we sometimes have of being true Christians, from a review of past experiences. But, then, this is ever attended with *present spiritual discernment* of Christ's excellence, and a longing desire after interest in him; and, herein, essentially differs from what we have been opposing. Confidence, in the one case, is nothing else but carnal security, tending to make men easy without God: confidence, in the other, is an actual venture of the soul afresh on the Lord Jesus, encouraged by his gracious testimony. The subject of the one considers himself as an established saint; the other, as a poor, lost sinner, and deals with Christ for salvation, just as he did when he first applied to him. To the one we say, *Be not high-minded, but fear:* to the other, *Fear not, thou shalt not be ashamed; none ever trusted in him, and was confounded.*

In what sense, then, do we walk by faith, and not by sight? I answer, in general, Walking by faith is a GOING FORWARD IN THE WAYS OF GODLINESS, AS INFLUENCED, NOT BY SENSIBLE, BUT BY INVISIBLE OBJECTS; OBJECTS, OF THE REALITY OF WHICH WE HAVE

NO EVIDENCE BUT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. But, perhaps, faith may be considered as opposed to sight, more particularly, in *three* senses ; namely, to corporal sight, to the discoveries of mere reason, and to ultimate vision.

1. To walk by faith is opposed to walking by *corporal sight*. In this sense we shall find it plentifully used in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, concerning Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others. Thus Abel, by faith, offered a more excellent offering than Cain. God had said, in effect, once for all, that he would never speak, nor be spoken to, in a way of friendship, by any of the human race, but through a mediator. This was intimated, partly by man's being debarred from all access to the tree of life, partly by the promise of the woman's seed, and partly by the institution of sacrifices. Cain overlooked all these, and approached God without an *expiatory* sacrifice ; as if there had been no breach between them, and so no need of an atonement. This was an instance of daring *unbelief* Abel, on the contrary, took God at his word, perceived the evil of sin, and the awful breach made by it; dared not to bring an offering without a victim for atonement; had respect to the promised Messiah ; and thus, by faith in the *unseen* Lamb, offered a more excellent offering than Cain.

Thus also it is said of Noah, *By faith he being warned of God of* THINGS NOT SEEN *as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world*, &c. No doubt, the world were ready to despise Noah, while building his ark, as an enthusiast, whose faculties were probably deranged, who put himself to a deal of trouble, and wanted to put other people to as much, merely through a notion that ran in his head, that the world should be drowned. Why, was there any thing in the world that looked like it, or seemed to portend such an event ? Nothing at all : all things seemed to continue as they were from the creation. What, then, could induce Noah to do as he did ? Nothing but the testimony of God, which he credited, and acted accordingly.

So also it is said of Abraham, when called to go into another country, *by faith he obeyed, and went out*, NOT KNOWING WHITHER HE WENT. A pretty errand it would seem, to his friends and

neighbours. It is possible that some of these, observing him preparing for a journey, might inquire whither he was going. 'Going? I am going to a land which *the Lord is to show me.*' 'And have you ever seen this land?' 'No: I neither know the country, nor a step of the way to it.' 'A fine tale, indeed! but seriously, what in the world can move you to such an undertaking?' 'I rely upon the *testimony of God.* He hath said, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land* THAT I WILL SHOW THEE: I take him at his word, and act accordingly.'

These were cases in point for the Apostle to quote. The Hebrews seemed hardly contented with an *unseen* High-priest, an *invisible* religion. They had been used to priests and sacrifices that they could hear, and see, and handle, with their bodily senses. Like their fathers by Moses, therefore, they were ready to say of Jesus, 'We know not where he is gone; come, let us make us a captain, and return to Judaism.' 'Judaism!' says the Apostle, 'methinks true Judaism would condemn you. All your forefathers acted upon a principle which you seem about to abandon. They walked by faith, not by sight. They lived, they died, in the faith, even in the faith of that very Messiah of whom you make so light.'

In this sense, it is easy to see, faith and sight are to be taken, in our Lord's rebuke to Thomas, when he says, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* It is as if he had said, 'You think you have acted very prudently; but what must the Christian word do, in after ages, if they act upon your principle? Christianity, in the whole of it, will depend upon testimony: whoever receives it after your death, yea, in your life time, besides yourselves, must receive it upon your testimony. Blessed are they that shall cordially so receive it; and blessed had you been, Thomas, to have set them the example, by believing the testimony of your brethren.'

2. Faith may be considered as opposed to the discoveries of *mere reason, unassisted by revelation.* In this sense it seems to be used in reference to Sarah. *Through faith she received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* How Sa-

rah should have a son, was not only indiscernible by the corporal eye, but by an eye of reason; since it must be, if at all, entirely beside the common course of nature. She had nothing to rely upon, in this case, but the promise of God.

We do not suppose faith and *right* reason to be opposites: that be far from us. On the contrary, nothing is more evident, than that Christianity is entirely a rational system; and it is its glory that it is so. We should never have been required to give *a reason* for the hope that is in us, if there had been no reason to be given. But, though nothing in revelation be contrary to right reason, yet there are many things which our reason could never have found out, had they not been made known by the Supreme Intelligence. The plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, in particular, contains a set of truths which the eye had never seen, nor the ear heard, nor had they entered the heart of man to conceive, had not God revealed them to us by his Spirit. For all the pleasure that we enjoy, brethren, in contemplating these glorious truths, we are wholly indebted to the testimony of God. Indeed, so far are they from being discoverable by mere reason, that every blessing contains in it abundantly more than men or angels could have asked or thought! It staggers our reason to receive it, even now it is told us. At every pause we must stand and wonder, saying, *Is this the manner of man O Lord!*

Not only was our reason incapable of finding out many truths before they were revealed; but, even now they are revealed, they contain things above our comprehension. It is one thing to say, that scripture is contrary to *right* reason, and another thing to say, it may exhibit truths too great for *our* reason to grasp.* God

* May not the great disputes which have taken place concerning *faith* and *reason*, as if the one were opposite to the other, have arisen, in a great degree, from using the term *reason* without defining it? The word *reason*, like the word *understanding* has two senses. 1. It signifies *the fitness of things*. So the apostles used it, when they said, *It is not* REASON *that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables*: that is, it is not *fit*, or *proper*. 2. It signifies *our power or capacity of reasoning*. So it is said of Nebuchadnezzar, that his *reason* returned to him: that is, his *power or capacity of reasoning*. Now, it is easy to see, that these are two essentially-different ideas: the one is perfect and immutable, remaining always the same: the other is shattered and broken by sin, and liable

must have told us nothing about his own existence, and infinite perfections, if he had told us nothing but what we could comprehend. In this case, it becomes us to know our littleness, and to bow our understandings to the Supreme Intelligence. It is the most rational thing in the world so to do. If God has said any thing, we ought to rest assured that so it is. In these cases, we ought to trust his eyes, so to speak, rather than our own, and be content to walk by faith, not by sight.

3. Faith may be considered as opposed to *ultimate vision*. The saints in glory are described as *seeing Christ as he is;* as *knowing even as they are known;* and as being citizens of a city where there shall be *no night*, and where they shall need *no candle*, neither *light of the sun nor light of the moon*, FOR THE LORD GOD SHALL BE THE LIGHT THEREOF. Our knowledge of things there will be immediate and intuitive, and not, as it is here, through the medium of the word and ordinances. The sacred scriptures are to us, (with reverence be it spoken,) like a letter from a distant friend;

to a thousand variations through blindness and prejudice. No divine truth can disagree with the former; but it may be both above and contrary to the latter.

If people were to talk, in matters of science and philosophy, as some have affected to talk in religion, they would be treated as fools, and deemed unworthy of attention. A philosopher, for instance, tells an unlettered countryman, that it is generally thought, that the earth turns round, every day, upon its own axis, and not the sun round the earth. The countryman replies, 'I don't believe it.' 'Very likely,' says the philosopher, 'but why not?' 'It is contrary to my *reason*.' 'Contrary to your reason, that may be; but I hope you do not think, that every thing contrary to *your* reason is contrary to *right* reason!' Were men of the greatest understanding but to consider, that there is a far greater disproportion between some truths respecting the existence of a God and their capacities, than between any truths of human science and the capacity of the most ignorant rustic, they would be ashamed to disbelieve a truth, because it is not according to *their* reason.

It is right, and stands commended in scripture, *to apply our hearts to understanding;* but it is wrong, and stands condemned in scripture, by the same pen, and in the same page, to *lean to our own understanding*. So, I apprehend, it is right to ahhere to *right* reason, and to use all means to find out what it is; but it is wrong and presumptuous to set up *our* reason as a standard competent to decide what is truth and what is error; for that is the same thing as supposing, that our ideas of fitness and unfitness always accord with the real fitness of things.

but when we come face to face, *ink and paper shall be needed no more.* However, for the present it is otherwise. We are yet in the body; and, while such, as the Apostle observes in the verse preceding the text, *we are absent from the Lord*, and must be glad of these helps. Let us make much of this letter, and be thankful that we can walk by it through this world, *as by a light in a dark place*, till we come to a better, where we shall no more walk by faith, but by sight.

Thus far I have dwelt chiefly upon the *terms;* but, that we may obtain a more comprehensive view of the thing itself, (namely, of a Christian's walking by faith,) let us take a view of a few of those circumstances and situations, through which he has to pass, during the present life. It is in these that faith, as well as every other grace, is exercised. Allow me, then, to request your attention, brethren, to four or five observations on the subject.

1. There are many *dark seasons in God's providential dealings with us*, in which we can see no way of escape, nor find any source of comfort, but *the testimony of God.* God's friends are not distinguished, in this world by an exemption from trying providences; he views that, methinks, as too trifling a badge of distinction. They shall be known by what is far more noble and advantageous; namely, by patience, obedience, submission, and divine support under them. Moreover, as we profess to be friends of God, and to trust the salvation of our souls, with all our concerns, in his hands, he sees it proper to prove the sincerity of our professions, and the stability of our hearts. He brings us into such circumstances, therefore, as shall try us, whether we will confide in him or not.

Christ has told his followers, once for all, that *all power in heaven and earth is in his hands;* that he is *head over all things to the church;* that he *will surely do them good;* that, however things may seem, *all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;* that, as to temporal things, let them but *trust in the Lord, and do good, and they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed;* and, as to eternal things, if they have a few light afflictions, they shall last but for *a moment* and shall *work for them a far more exceeding and*

eternal weight of glory. These promises seem easy to be believed, when things go smooth and pleasing; and it is very natural for us, in a day of prosperity, to talk of these things, and try and comfort those with them who are labouring in adversity. But the greatest trial is when it comes home to ourselves. Then it is well, if we fall not under the reproof of Eliphaz, *Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees: but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.* Then, if ever, is the time for us to walk by faith, and not by sight.

We create to ourselves darlings, and place much of our happiness in their enjoyment. God not unfrequently takes these first away, as being most his rivals. If one child is more beloved than all the rest; if he must be clothed with a coat of many colours, the coat must quickly be returned without the owner; yes, the period must soon arrive, when it shall be said, *Joseph is not!* These, with a few more strokes of the kind, will try Jacob's faith to the uttermost; and he will find it hard work to reconcile promises with providences. '*Thou saidst I will surely do thee good: but all these things are against me.*' Ah, he fails! He fails, like Asaph in a similar condition, who could not see how God could be *good to Israel,* when *waters of a full cup were wrung out to them.* The Shunamitish woman will set us a better example than either the Patriarch or the prophet. *Is it well?* said Elisha's servant when her child lay dead in her house. She replied, IT IS WELL. This was, in effect, saying, 'Whether I can see, it or not, I know he doeth all things well.' This is believing when we cannot see, taking God at his word, against all the rebellion of sense and feeling. This is what Jacob should have done; but O that Jacob had failed alone! If to resemble him, in this instance, would constitute us Israelites, we should most of us be *Israelites indeed!*

We are often very thrifty in devising plans for futurity, and apt to promise ourselves great degrees of happiness, when they are accomplished. Here it is common for God to throw confusion upon our schemes, and cause things to run in a different channel from what we expected. Job, while in prosperity, sat like a bird in

her well-feathered nest, and thought within himself, 'I shall live to enjoy numerous years of uninterrupted prosperity, to see children's children, and then go down to the grave in peace; or, as he himself afterwards, in the bitter hour of reflection, expressed it, *I said, I shall die in my nest, I shall multiply my days as the sand!*' Well, so he did at last; but there was a melancholy chasm in his life, which he never expected. Such there are, more or less, in all our lives; and, in such situations, it is well if we do not think hard of our best friend. Some have been ready to ask, 'Is this love? Is this his doing, who has said, I will surely do thee good?' Yes, and you shall see it in the end, as Asaph did; who, after he had been to God's sanctuary, and saw things as they were, went home, it seems and penned the seventy third psalm, beginning it all in ecstacy, saying, TRULY GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL! Christians, how criminal, how cruel, that he that never failed us at any time, should be so mistrusted as he is! It should seem to suggest, as if he were such a God that we cannot trust him out of sight!

How amiable is that spirit, how happy is that heart, that, in every situation, places unbounded confidence in JEHOVAH'S word. Such may be hedged up on every side, and encompassed, like Israel at the Red sea, with seemingly insurmountable difficulties; yet, even here, they will follow Israel's example, they will cry unto God, and rely upon his mercy. If means can be used, they will use them; if not, they will *stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Speak unto the children of Israel*, said the Lord, *that they go forward.* 'Go forward!' they might have replied, 'what, leap at once into the jaws of destruction?' But nothing of this. At first, indeed, their faith seemed to fail them, but they soon recovered themselves. *Speak unto the children of Israel*, said the Lord, *that they go forward;* they went; a way was made in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. Well may it be said, BY FAITH Israel passed through the Red sea. Minds thus disposed might defy the united sources of worldly sorrow to render them unhappy. Let *poverty* stare them in the face, let pinching *want* stretch over them her miserable sceptre, they have been known, even here, by faith, to break forth into songs of praise. Thus sang good Habakkuk:

(and this evidently appears to be his situation, and not a state of *spiritual declension*:) *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* Thus also sang the church, even in her captivity, when her country was laid waste, Jerusalem razed to the ground, and the temple burnt to ashes: *The* LORD *is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in* HIM!

2. In all our *approaches to, and fellowship with Christ*, it is by *faith* in the account that God has given of him in his word. Christ's excellence, undertaking, and benefits, are the joy, and even the life of our souls, if we are true Christians. But what *evidence* have we of all or any if these? Yea, what evidence have we that there is, or ever was, such a person as Jesus Christ? or, if there was, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God? We neither saw him alive, nor die, rise again, nor ascend to heaven. We never saw the miracles he wrought, nor heard the voice from the excellent glory, saying, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.* We speak of his personal excellencies, divine and human; of his love, zeal, righteousness, meekness, patience, &c. but what know we of them? We rejoice in his being constituted our surety, to obey the law, and endure the curse in our stead; but how know we that so indeed it is. We glory in the imputation of his righteousness, and exult in the hope of being found in him, and being for ever with him, faultless before his throne, to serve him day and night in his temple; but on what do we rely for all this? If our expectations are but just, truly they are noble; but if groundless, extravagant. Are they, then, well founded? Yes, *the testimony of God* is the rock whereon they rest. He has told us, by the mouth of his servants, the inspired writers, all that is necessary for us to know, of the character, conduct, and errand of his Son; of every office he sustained, and every end for which he came into the world. To all this he has added, that *whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* So they have preached, and so we have believed. We have, through grace, ventured our everlasting ALL in his hands; nor is it in the hands of we know not who: *we know*

whom we have trusted, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him against that day. For, though none of these things are visible to our mortal eyes, yet, having evidence that God has said them, we are satisfied. We would as soon trust God's word, as our own eyes. Thus we walk, like Moses, *as seeing him who is invisible:* and thus answer to that description, *Whom having* NOT SEEN *ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet* BELIEVING, *ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

In all our applications to Christ, we have to rely merely upon the testimony of God. Here is a poor, self-condemned sinner comes pressing through the crowd of discouraging apprehensions, that he may, so to speak, touch the hem of the Redeemer's garment, and be made whole. As he approaches, one set of thoughts suggests, How can such a monster hope for mercy? Is it not doubtful, whether there be efficacy enough in the blood of Christ itself to pardon such heinous crimes? 'I know my crimes are heinous beyond expression,' replies the burdened soul, 'and I should, doubtless, give up my case as desperate, but that I have heard, of him, that *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.* I will go, therefore; who can tell?' As he goes, other objections assail him, questioning, whether Christ can *find in his heart* to accept of such an one? 'I should think not, indeed,' rejoins the poor man, 'but he has said, *Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.* I know, were I to consult nothing but my feelings, and only to fix my eyes on the enormity of my sin, I should utterly despair; but, encouraged by HIS WORD, I will go forward; I will walk by faith, not by sight: O, I hear him say, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden—and ye shall find rest unto your souls!* This, this is what I want! Depart from me, all ye that vex my soul; I will go in the strength of the Lord God!'

3. We have to *give up many present enjoyments*, for Christ's sake, wherein we have no *visible* prospect of recompence, none of any kind, but what arises from *the promise of God.* Self-denial is one of the initial laws of Christ's kingdom. Far from enticing people into his service, by promises of wealth, ease, and honour, he set out with this public declaration, *Whosoever will be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.* But who

would enter, upon these terms? Who would give up houses, lands, friends, and reputation, and expose himself o hardships persecution, and death, for nothing? Yet many followed him, and that to the day of their death; yea, and upon these very terms too; *they left all and followed him.* What, then, induced them? Did not they act irrationally? 'Prophets, apostles, and martyrs! what mean ye? Have ye no regard for yourselves? What! are you destitute of the feelings of men?' 'No such thing: we *have respect unto the recompence of reward.*' '*Reward*! what can that be? nothing surely below the sun, unless it were every thing the reverse of what is agreeable to human nature!' 'True; but our Lord has declared, *Whosoever shall forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and inherit everlasting life.* We rely upon this, and this supports us.'

God's friend's in all ages, have forsaken sensible, for invisible enjoyments. Encouraged by considerations like these, Ruth forsook her father and her mother, and the land of her nativity, and came to a people whom she knew not. It was this that determined her to go forward, when, as Naomi told her, there were no earthly prospects before her. It was this that made her resolve not to go back with Orpha, but to cast in her lot with the friends of the God of Israel. *The Lord recompense thy work*, said Boaz to her, afterwards, *and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust!*'

The same things influenced Moses, it seems, to refuse a crown. It has been thought, that, in virtue of his adoption, he might have been king of Egypt; but that throne, not only like other thrones, exposed him that sat thereon to numberless snares, but probably was inaccessible to any but those who would continue the system of idolatry and oppression. In that case, for Moses to have been king of Egypt, must have been to have sacrificed a good conscience, despised a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and united in persecuting his own, and the Lord's people. Moses seems fully to have weighed this matter. The result was, he *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin*

for a season; esteeming even *the* REPROACH *of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.* He therefore, freely, leaves the life of a courtier; avows himself the friend of the poor despised captives; and dares to retire into Midian, to live the life of an obscure shepherd. I say, he *dared* to retire; for it required a greater degree of fortitude thus to deny himself, than to stand in the forefront of a battle, or to face the mouth of a cannon! But *by faith he forsook Egypt, and went and lived a stranger in a strange land, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible;* yes, *he had respect unto the recompence of reward.*

In short, through this, the holy tribes of martyrs, in all ages, loved not their lives unto the death. By faith in invisible realities, as the apostle to the Hebrews largely proves, they bore all manner of cruelties, not accepting deliverance itself upon dishonourable conditions; suffered all kinds of deaths with unremitting fortitude, and, in some sort, like their glorious Leader, triumphed over principalities and powers, when they fell.

Indeed, every man in the world may be said to walk either by faith or by sight. There is not only a giving up sensible for invisible enjoyments, by *actually parting with them*, but by *not setting our hearts upon them*, as our chief good. This may be done where there is no call actually to give them up, and is done by all real Christians in the world. Men whose chief good consists in the profits, pleasures, or honours of this life, live by *sight;* they derive their life from objects before their eyes, having neither patience nor inclination to wait for a portion in the world to come. But good men, as well the rich as the poor, derive their life from above, and so live by faith: their *life is hid with Christ in God.*

Perhaps here, as much as any where, is required the peculiar exercise of faith. For one actually divested of earthly good to look upward, and set his heart on things above, is faith; but for one still possessed of this, one on whom providence smiles, prospering him in all he sets his hand to, blessing him with wife and children, houses and lands, in abundance; for him to exercise such a degree of indifference to all these, as to derive his chief happiness from invisible realities, this is faith indeed! This seems to have been exemplified in Abraham, and other patriarchs. Of

him it is said, *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.* How is this? We do not wonder, when he and Sarah went into Egypt, on account of a famine, that he should consider himself a sojourner there; but how is it that he should do so in Canaan, the land of promise, his own estate, as it were? The next verse informs us: *for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* So Jacob, when before Pharaoh, called his whole life a *pilgrimage*, though the far greater part of it was spent in the land of promise; and *they that say such things*, adds the Apostle, *declare plainly, that they seek a country.* Though God had given them the good land, they would not make it their *chief* good. They could not be contented with this Canaan, but longed for another. Noble souls! bid them lift up their eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and tell them, all they can see is their own; still they will not live by sight, but by faith: *they will desire a better country, that is an heavenly.*

4. There are many low and distressing seasons to which the *church of God* is subject, in which there is little or no *visible* ground of encouragement, scarcely any but what arises from *the promise of God.* The whole church of God, as individuals, has, in all ages, had its day of adversity set over against the day of prosperity. Israel, after their deliverence from Egypt and settlement in Canaan, enjoyed pretty much prosperity, especially in the days of David and Solomon. But afterwards, by a series of provocations, they procured to themselves the Babylonish captivity. At that melancholy period, those amongst them that feared the Lord must be supposed to be all in darkness. Jerusalem laid waste; the temple burnt with fire; Judah carried captive; ah, what becomes of God's inserest in the world! The *foundations* of his visible kingdom seemed to be *laid in the holy mountains* round about Jerusalem; if these are destroyed, what can the righteous do? They had long sighed and cried for the idolatrous abominations of their countrymen, and prayed, and hoped that mercy might be lengthened out; but now all seems over. For their idolatry, they must go, and have enough of idolaters: they that feared the Lord must also go with them. By the rivers of Baby-

lon they must go and sit down. Those that had been used to sound the high praises of God in Zion, must now hang their harps upon the willows, as having no use for them! Nor is this the worst; they must be taunted and their GOD derided, by their insulting lords. *Come*, said they, *sing us one of the songs of Zion* as if they had said, 'Now see what your religion has availed you! This was your favourite employ, and these the songs wherewith you addressed your Deity, in whom you confided to deliver you out of our hands: what think you now?' Poor Zion? *She spreadeth forth her hands, but there is none to comfort her. The Lord hath commanded, that her adversaries should be round about her:* her captive sons can only remember Jerusalem, and weep! Alas, *how can they sing the Lord's song in a strange land!*

But is there no help from above? Is there no physician there? Yes, the God whom Babel derides, but Judah adores, looks down, and sees their affliction. To his disheartened friends, in this situation, he addresses himself, saying, *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* As if he should say, 'For a season you must walk by faith, and not by sight; but, trust me, that season shall soon be over. Seventy years, and Babylon shall fall, and Judah return!' By these declarations, the church was encouraged in her captivity, and furnished with an answer to her insulting foes: yea, and what is wonderful, breaks forth into one of the Lord's songs in a strange land! (Hearken, O Babel, to *one of the songs of Zion!*) *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God?*

This is encouraging to us as *churches*, and as *ministers*. We have, in many cases, to walk in darkness, and have no light, and to go on in our ministrations, in a great degree, like the prophet Isaiah, lamenting that so few have believed our report, so few to whom

the arm of the Lord has been revealed. When death removes worthy characters, we must sometimes live, and lament to see their places unoccupied by others of the like character: and, what is worse, instead of increase by Christ's conquests, we must sometimes live to see a decrease by the conquests of the evil one! Many a faithful minister has had to preach, year after year, till, either by public scandals, or private disgusts, many of his people have gone off, and walked no more with him. But let him then remember the testimony of God: *Him that honoureth me I will honour.* Let him go on, and faithfully discharge his duty, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: let him, and those that are with him, walk by faith, and not by sight. It often proves, that, after such a night of weeping, comes a morning of rejoicing. Let us not be discouraged; better breath than ours has been spent apparently in vain. Our Lord himself seemed to labour in vain, and to spend his strength for nought; but he comforted himself in this, (herein leaving us an example,) *Through Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.*

This may encourage and direct us in larger concerns; concerns which respect the *whole interest of Christ* in the world. If we compare the present state of things, or even the past, with the glorious prophecies of the word of God, we cannot think, surely, that all is yet accomplished. By these prophecies, the Christian church is encouraged to look for great things, at some period or other of her existence. She is taught to look for a time when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;* when *a nation shall be born at once;* when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;* and he *shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* But surely, for the present, though great things, upon the whole, have been done in the world, yet nothing like this has ever come to pass. Instead of the world being conquered, what a great part yet continues to stand out against him. Heathenism, Mahometanism, Popery, and Infidelity, how extensive still their influence! In all probability, not a single country, city, town, village, or congregation, has ever yet been brought wholly to submit to Christ! Nay, is it not very rare to find, in any one

of these, so many real friends as to make even a majority in his favour? May not the Christian church then, for the present, adopt that language, *We have been with child, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen?* What then? shall we despair? God forbid! *The vision is yet for an appointed time but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry;* and, meanwhile, *the just shall live by faith.*

Let us take encouragement, in the present day of small things, by looking forward, and hoping for better days. Let this be attended with *earnest* and *united prayer* to him by whom Jacob must arise. A life of faith will ever be a life of prayer, O brethren, let us pray much for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon our ministers and churches, and not upon those only of our own connexion and denomination, but upon *all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord both theirs and ours!*

Our hope of a *better state, when this is over,* is built on faith in God's testimony. We have no sort of evidence, but this, that any such state exists. We cannot *see* any thing of the kind, or aught from which we can infer it. We cannot learn it from any of our senses. Reason itself could never have found it out. Reason might have taught us the idea of a *future* state, but not of a future state of *bliss.* Though much might be argued from the fitness of things, to prove that man is not made barely for the present life, yet nothing could be drawn from thence to prove, that *rebels* against the Supreme Being should live in a state of eternal felicity; no, for this we are wholly indebted to the *word of promise.* Hence faith is said to be *the* SUBSTANCE. GROUND, or FOUNDATION *of things hoped for.* Supported by *that*, we sustain our heaviest losses; and attracted by *these*, we come up out of great tribulations, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, till we shall overcome, and *sit down with him in his throne, as he also hath overcome, and is set down with his father in his throne.*

II. We will now add a few words on the IMPORTANCE of such a life. If, all things considered, it would have been best for us to have always *seen* our way before us, to have been guided, so to

speak, with our own eyes, and not to have implicitly followed the directions of God, no doubt so it would have been ordered. But he who perfectly, and at once, saw the beginning and end of all things, judged otherwise. With the highest wisdom, no doubt, he formed the resolution, *the just shall live by faith.* It may be impossible for us, in the present state, to find out all the reasons for this resolution; but two or three seem to present themselves to our view.

1. Such a life brings *great glory to God.* Confidence is universally a medium of honour. To confide in a fellow-creature, puts honour upon him in the account of others, and affords a pleasure to himself; especially if he be a wise and upright character, as it gives him an opportunity of proving his wisdom and fidelity. Though the great God cannot be *made* more honorable than he *is*, by any thing that we can do, yet his honour may, by this, be made more *apparent.* We honour him, so far as we form just conceptions of him in our own minds, and act so as to give just representations of him to others. God is graciously pleased to declare, that *he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy;* and why? surely, among other things, because it gives him occasion to display the glory of his grace. And, as he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy, and rely upon it; so he takes pleasure in ordering things so that we may be put to the trial, whether we will rely on him, or not. It was this which induced him to lead Israel through the wilderness rather than by the ready road to Canaan. He knew they would be *in fact*, dependent upon him, let them be where they would; but they would not be *sensible* of that dependence, nor have so much opportunity of entirely trusting him, in any way as in this; and so it would not be so much for the glory of his great name. He therefore would lead a nation, with all their little ones, into an inhospitable desert, where was scarcely a morsel of meat to eat, and, in many places, not a drop of water to drink; a land of deserts and of pits, of scorpions and fiery flying serpents: here, if any where, they must be sensibly dependant on God. They must be fed and preserved immediately from heaven itself, and that by miracle, or all perish in a few days! Here God must appear to be what he was: here mercy and truth must appear to go with them indeed!

What an opportunity was afforded them to have walked these forty years by faith; what grounds for an entire confidence: but, alas, their faithless hearts perverted their way, and, in the end, proved their ruin! Ten times they tempted God in the desert, till, at length, he sware, concerning that generation, that, for their unbelief, they should die in the wilderness, and never enter his rest. Few, if any, besides Joshua and Caleb, would dare to trust him, notwithstanding all his wonders and all his mercies! They, however, for their part, took hold of his strength, and thought themselves *able*, having God on their side, to encounter any thing! Their spirit was to walk by faith, and not by sight; and herein it is easy to see how they glorified God.

O brethren! let *the glory of God* lie near our hearts! Let it be dearer to us than our dearest delights! Herein consists the criterion of true love to him. Let us, after the noble example of Joshua and Caleb, *follow the Lord fully*. Let us approve of every thing that tends to glorify him. Let us be reconciled to his conduct, who *suffers us to hunger, that we may know that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*. If he should bring us into hard and difficult situations; situations to an eye of sense impossible to be endured, let us remember, that it is that he may give us an opportunity of glorifying him, by trusting him in the dark. The more difficult the trial, the more glory to him that bears us through; and the greater opportunity is afforded us, for proving that we can indeed trust him with *all* our concerns; that we can trust him, when we cannot see the end of his present dispensations.

Those very much dishonour God, who profess to trust him for another world, but, in the common difficulties of this, are perpetually murmuring, peevish, and distrustful. How different was it with Abraham, in offering up his son Isaac. 'What, offer up Isaac! my son, my only son of promise! Why, is not the Messiah to spring out of his loins? What are to become of all the nations of the earth, who are to be *blessed* in him?' How natural and excusable might such questions have seemed; much more so than most of our objections to the divine conduct. Sense, in this case, had it been consulted, must have entered a thousand protests.

But the *father of the faithful* consulted not with flesh and blood, not doubting but God knew what he was about, if he himself did not. (O that we may prove ourselves the *children* of faithful Abraham !) *Against hope*, in appearance, *he believed in hope* of divine all-sufficiency ; fully persuaded, that what God had promised he was able to perform, he stretched forth his obedient arm ; nor had he recalled it, had not heaven interposed : he was *strong in faith*, GIVING GLORY TO GOD.

2. It is productive of *great good to us*. The glory of God, and the good of those that love him, (thanks be to his name !) always go together. It is equally to their benefit as to his honour, for instance, to *lie low* before him, and to feel their *entire dependence* upon him. It is essential to the real happiness of an intelligent creature, to be in its *proper place*, and to take a complacency in being so. But nothing tends more to cultivate these dispositions than God's determining, that, at present, we should walk by faith, and not by sight. Faith, in the whole of it, tends more than a little to abase the fallen creature ; and to *walk* by faith, (which is as much as to acknowledge that we are blind, and must see with the eyes of another,) is very humbling. The objects of our desire being, frequently, for a time, withheld, and we, being at such times, reduced to situations wherein we can *see* no help, and thus obliged to repose our trust in God, contributes more than a little to make us feel our dependence upon him. Agur saw that a constant fullness of this world was unfriendly to a spirit of entire dependence upon God ; therefore he prayed, *Give me not riches; lest I be full and deny thee.* Whatever tends to *humble* and *try* us, tends to *do us good in the latter end.*

Great and wonderful is the consolation that such a life affords. In all the vicissitudes of life and horrors of death, nothing can cheer and fortify the mind like this. By faith in an unseen world, we can endure injuries without revenge, afflictions without fainting, and losses without despair. Let the nations of the earth dash, like potsherds, one against another; yea, let nature herself approach towards her final dissolution ; let her groan, as being ready to expire, and sink into her primitive nothing ; still the believer lives !

His all is not on board that vessel! His chief inheritance lies in another soil!

> 'His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
> And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl!'

3. It will *make vision the sweeter.* It affords a great pleasure, when we make a venture of any kind, to find ourselves at last not disappointed. If a considerate man embark his all on board a vessel, and himself with it, he may have a thousand fears, before he reaches the end of his voyage; yet should he, after numberless dangers, safely arrive, and find it not only answer, but far exceed his expectations, his joy will then be greater than if he had run no hazard at all. What he has gained will seem much sweeter than if it had fallen to him in a way that had cost him nothing. Thus believers venture their all in the hands of Christ, persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day. To find at last, that they have not confided in him in vain; yea, that their expectations are not only answered, but infinitely out-done, will surely enhance the bliss of heaven. The remembrance of our dangers, fears and sorrows, will enable us to enjoy the heavenly state with a degree of happiness impossible to have been felt, if those dangers, fears, and sorrows had never existed.

My hearers! We all of us live either by faith or by sight; either upon things heavenly or things earthly. If on the former, let us go on, upon the word of God; everlasting glory is before us! But, if on the latter, alas, our store will be soon exhausted! All these dear delights are but the brood of time, a brood that will soon take to themselves wings and, with her that cherished them, fly away. Oh, my hearers! is it not common for many of you to suppose that those who live by faith in the enjoyments of a world to come, live upon mere imaginations? But are ye not mistaken? It is your enjoyments, and not theirs, that are imaginary. Pleasures, profits, honours, what are they? The whole form only a kind of *ideal* world, a sort of splendid *show*, like that in a dream, which, when you wake, all is gone! At most, it is but a *fashion*, and a fashion that *passeth* away. To grasp it, is to grasp a shadow; and to feed upon it, is to feed upon the wind. O that you

may turn away your eyes from beholding these vanities, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the substantial realities beyond the grave, for your never-failing portion!

But if not, if you still prefer this world, with its enjoyments, to those which are heavenly, how just will it be for the Lord Jesus to say to you, at the last great day, '*Depart!* Depart, you have had your reward! you have had your choice; what would you have? You never chose me for your portion: you, in effect, said of me and my interest, *We will have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse; see to thyself, David.*' Ah, now, see to thyself, sinner!

Christians, ministers, brethren, all of us, let us realize the subject. Let us pray, and preach, and hear, and do every thing we do, with eternity in view! Let us deal much with Christ and invissible realities. Let us, whenever called, freely deny ourselves for his sake, and trust him to make up the loss. Let us not faint under present difficulties, but consider them as opportunities afforded us to glorify God. Let us be ashamed that we derive our happiness so much from things below, and so little from things above. In one word, let us fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life!

THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER, ILLUSTRATED BY THE CHARACTER AND SUCCESS OF BARNABAS.

SERMON II.

[To the Rev. Robert Fawkner, at his settlement in the Pastoral Office, over the Church at Thorn, in Bedfordshire, Oct. 31, 1787

Acts xi. 24.

He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added to the Lord.

My dear Brother,

It is a very important work to which you are this day set apart. I feel the difficulty of your situation. You need both counsel and encouragement; I wish I were better able to administer both. In what I may offer, I am persuaded you will allow me to be free; and understand me, not as assuming any authority or superiority over you, but only as saying that to you which I wish to consider as equally addressed to myself.

Out of a variety of topics that might afford a lesson for a Christian minister, my thoughts have turned, on this occasion, upon that

of *example*. Example has a great influence upon the human mind: examples from scripture especially, wherein characters the most illustrious in their day, for gifts, grace, and usefulness, are drawn with the pencil of inspiration, have an assimilating tendency. Viewing these, under a divine blessing, we form some just conceptions of the nature and importance of our work, are led to reflect upon our own defects, and feel the fire of holy emulation kindling in our bosoms.

The particular example, my brother, which I wish to recommend to your attention is that of Barnabas, that excellent servant of Christ, and companion of the apostle Paul. You will find his character particularly given in the words I have just read.

Were we to examine the life of this great and good man, as related in other parts of scripture, we should find the character here given him abundantly confirmed. He seems to have been one of that great company, who, through the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, submitted to Christ soon after his ascension: and he gave early proof of his love to him, by selling his possessions, and laying the price at the feet of the apostles, for the support of his infant cause. As he loved Christ, so he loved his people. He appears to have possessed much of the tender and affectionate, on account of which he was called *Barnabas—a son of consolation.* Assiduous in discovering and encouraging the first dawnings of God's work, he was the first person that introduced Saul into the company of the disciples. The next news that we hear of him is in the passage which I have selected. Tidings came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem, of the word of the Lord being prosperous at Antioch, in Syria. The church at Jerusalem was the mother church, and felt a concern for others, like that of a tender mother towards her infant offspring. The young converts at Antioch wanted a nursing father; and who so proper to be sent as Barnabas? He goes; and, far from envying the success of others, who had laboured before him, he *was glad to see the grace of God* so evidently appear; *and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* As a preacher, he does not seem to have been equal to the apostle Paul; yet so far was he from caring about being eclipsed by Paul's superior abilities, that he went

in search of him, and brought him to Antioch, to assist him in the work of the Lord. It may well be said of such a character, that he was a *good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.* O that we had more such ministers in the Church at this day? O that we ourselves were like him! Might we not hope, if that were the case, that, according to God's usual manner of working, more *people would be added to the Lord?*

There are three things, we see, which are said of Barnabas in a way of commendation: he was *a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.* Thus far he is held up for our example: a fourth is added, concerning the effects which followed: *and much people was added unto the Lord.* This seems to be held up for our encouragement. Permit me, my dear brother, to request your candid attention, while I attempt to review these great qualities in Barnabas, and by every motive to enforce them upon you

I. He was A GOOD MAN. It were easy to prove the necessity of a person being a good man, in order to his properly engaging in the work of the ministry: Christ would not commit his sheep but to one that loved him. But on this remark I shall not enlarge, I have no reason to doubt, my brother, but that God has given you an understanding to know him that is true, and a heart to love him in sincerity; I trust, therefore, such an attempt, on this occasion, is needless. Nor does it appear, to me, to be the meaning of the Evangelist. It is not barely meant of Barnabas that he was a *regenerate* man, though that is implied; but it denotes that he was *eminently* good. We use the word so, in common conversation. If we would describe one that more than ordinarily shines in piety, meekness, and kindness we know not how to speak of him better than to say, with a degree of emphasis, He is a *good* man. After this eminency in goodness, brother, may it be your concern, and mine, daily to aspire!

Perhaps, indeed, we may have sometimes heard this epithet used with a sneer. Persons who take pleasure in treating others with contempt, will frequently, with a kind of proud pity, speak in this manner: Aye, such a one is a *good* man; leaving it implied, that goodness is but an indifferent qualification, unless it be aocompanied with greatness. But these things ought not to be. The

apostle Paul did not value himself upon those things wherein he differed from other Christians; but upon that which he possessed in common with them—charity, or Christian love. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

My dear brother, *value the character of a good man in all the parts of your employment; and, above all, in those things which the world counts great and estimable.* More particularly,

1. Value it *at home in your family.* If you walk not closely with God there, you will be ill able to work for him elsewhere. You have lately become the head of a family. Whatever charge it shall please God, in the course of your life, to place under your care, I trust it will be your concern to recommend Christ and the gospel to them, walk circumspectly before them, constantly worship God with them, offer up secret prayer for them, and exercise a proper authority over them. There is a sort of religious gossipping, which some ministers have indulged to their hurt; loitering about perpetually at the houses of their friends, and taking no delight in their own. Such conduct, in a minister and master of a family, must, of necessity, root out all family order, and, to a great degree, family worship; and, instead of endearing him to his friends, it only exposes him to their just censure. Perhaps they know not how to be so plain as to tell him of it at their own houses; but they will think the more, and speak of it, it is likely, to each other, when he is gone. I trust, my brother, that none of your domestic connexions will have to say, when you are gone, He was loose and careless in his conduct, or sour and churlish in his temper: but rather, He was *a good man.*

2. Value this character in your *private retirements.* Give yourself up to *the word of God, and to prayer.* The Apostle charged Timothy, saying, *Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them;* or, *be thou* IN *them.* But this will never be, without a considerable share of the *good man.* Your heart can never be *in* those things which are foreign to its prevailing temper; and

if your heart is not in your work, it will be a poor lifeless business indeed. We need not fear exhausting the Bible, or dread a scarcity of divine subjects. If our hearts are but kept in unison with the spirit in which the Bible was written, every thing we meet with there will be interesting. The more we read the more interesting it will appear; and the more we know, the more we shall perceive there is to be known. Beware also, brother, of neglecting secret *prayer*. The fire of devotion will go out, if it be not kept alive by an habitual dealing with Christ. Conversing with men and things may brighten our gifts and parts; but it is conversing with God that must brighten our graces. Whatever ardour we may feel in our public work, if this is wanting, things cannot be right, nor can they, in such a train, come to a good issue.

3. Value it in your *public exercises*. It is hard going on, in the work of the ministry, without a good degree of spirituality; and yet, considering the present state of human nature, we are in the greatest danger of the contrary. Allow me, brother, to mention two things in particular, each of which are directly opposite to that spirit which I am attempting to recommend. One is, an *assumed earnestness*, or *forced zeal*, in the pulpit, which many weak hearers may mistake for the enjoyment of God. But, though we may put on violent emotions; may smite with the hand, and stamp with the foot; if we are destitute of a genuine feeling sense of what we deliver, it will be discerned by judicious hearers, as well as by the Searcher of hearts, and will not fail to create disgust. If, on the contrary, we feel and realize the sentiments we deliver, emotions and actions will be the natural expressions of the heart; and this will give weight to the doctrines, exhortations, or reproofs which we inculcate: what we say will come with a kind of divine authority to the consciences, if not to the hearts of the hearers. The other is, being under the influence of *low and selfish motives*, in the exercise of our work. This is a temptation against which we have especial reason to watch and pray. It is right, my brother, for you to be diligent in your public work; to be instant in season and out of season; to preach the gospel, not only at Thorn, but in the surrounding villages, wherever a door is opened for

you: but, while you are thus engaged, let it not be from motives of policy, merely to increase your auditory; but from love to Christ and the souls of your fellow-sinners. It is this only that will endure reflection in a dying hour. The Apostle Paul was charged, by some of the Corinthian teachers, with being *crafty*, and with having *caught* the Corinthians *with guile*: but he could say, in reply to all such insinuations, in behalf of himself and his fellow-labourers, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*

4. Value it in the *general tenor of your behaviour.* Cultivate a meek, modest, peaceful, and friendly temper. Be generous and humane. Prove, by your spirit and conduct, that you are a lover of all mankind. To men in general, but especially to the poor and the afflicted, *be pitiful, be courteous.* It is this, my brother, that will recommend the gospel you proclaim. Without this, could you preach with the eloquence of an angel, you may expect that no good end will be answered.

5. Prize the character of the good man, *above worldly greatness.* It is not sinful for a minister, any more than another man, to possess property; but to aspire after it is unworthy of his sacred character. Greatness, unaccompanied with goodness, is valued as nothing by the great God. Kings and emperors, where that is wanting, are but great *beasts, horned beasts,* pushing one at another. When Sennacherib vaunted against the church of God, that he would *enter the forest of her Carmel, and cut down her tall cedars,* the daughter of Zion is commanded to *despise* him. God speaks of him as we should speak of a buffalo, or even of an ass, *I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.* Outward greatness, when accompanied with goodness, may be a great blessing; yet, even then, it is the latter, and not the former, that denominates the true worth of a character. Once more,

6. Value it *above mental greatness,* or greatness in gifts and parts. It is not wrong to cultivate gifts; on the contrary, it is our duty so to do. But, desirable as these are, they are not to be compared with goodness. *Covet earnestly the best gifts,* says the

Apostle, AND YET SHOW I UNTO YOU A MORE EXCELLENT WAY ; viz. *charity, or love.* If we improve in gifts, and not in grace, to say the least, it will be useless, and, perhaps, dangerous, both to ourselves and others. To improve in gifts, that we may be the better able to discharge our work, is laudable ; but if it be for the sake of popular applause, we may expect a blast. Hundreds of ministers have been ruined by indulging a thirst for the charater of the great man, while they have neglected the far superior characters of the good man.

Another part of the character of Barnabas was, that

II. He was FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The *Holy Spirit* sometimes denotes his extraordinary gifts, as in Acts xix. where the apostle Paul put the question to some believers in Christ, whether they had received the Holy Spirit ; but here it signifies his indwelling and ordinary operations, or what is elsewhere called an *unction from the Holy One.* This, though more common than the other, is far more excellent. Its fruits, though less brilliant, are abundantly the most valuable. To be able to surmount a difficulty by Christian patience, is a greater thing, in the sight of God, than to remove a mountain. Every work of God bears some mark of godhead, even a thistle or a nettle ; but there are some of his works which bear a peculiar likeness to his holy moral character: such were the minds of men and angels in their original state. This will serve to illustrate the subject in hand. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are a communication of his *power* ; but in his dwelling in the saints, and the ordinary operations of his grace, he communicates his own *holy nature* ; and this it was of which Barnabas was full. To be full of the Holy Spirit, is to be full of the dove, as I may say ; or full of those fruits of the Spirit mentioned by the Apostle to the Galatians; namely, *love, joy, peace, long-sufferings, gentleness. goodness.*

To be sure, the term *full* is not here to be understood in an unlimited sense; not in so ample a sense as when it is applied to Christ. He was filled with the spirit *without* measure, but we in measure. The word is doubtless to be understood in a comparative sense, and denotes as much as that he was habitually under his holy influence. A person that is greatly under the influence

of the love of this world, is said to be drunken with its cares, or pleasures. In allusion to something like this, the Apostle exhorts that we *be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but* FILLED *with the Spirit.* The word *filled,* here, is very expressive; it denotes, I apprehend, being *overcome,* as it were, with the holy influences and fruits of the blessed Spirit. How necessary is all this, my brother in your work! O how necessary is *an unction from the Holy One!*

I. It is this that will enable you to *enter into the spirit of the gospel and preserve you from destructive errors* concerning it. Those who have an unction from the Holy One, are said to *know all things; and the anointing which they have received abideth in them, and they need not that any man teach them: but, as the same anointing teacheth them all things, and is truth, and is no lie.* We shall naturally fall in with the dictates of that spirit of which we are full. It is for want of this in a great measure, that the scriptures appear strange, and foreign, and difficult to be understood. He that is full of the Holy Spirit, has the contents of the Bible written, as I may say upon his heart; and thus its sacred pages are easy to be understood, as *wisdom is easy to him that understandeth.*

It is no breach of charity to say, that, if the professors of Christianity had more of the spirit of God in their hearts, there would be a greater harmony among them respecting the great truths which he has revealed. The rejection of such doctrines as the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the total depravity of mankind, the proper deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith in his name, the freeness and sovereignty of grace, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, may easily be accounted for, upon this principle. If we are destitute of the Holy Spirit, we are blind to the loveliness of the divine character, and destitute of any true love to God in our hearts; and, if destitute of this, we shall not be able to see the reasonableness of that law which requires love to him with all the heart; and then, of course, we shall think lightly of the nature of those offences committed against him; we shall be naturally disposed to palliate and excuse our want of love to him, yea, and even our positive violations of his law; it will seem hard,

very hard indeed, for such little things as these to be punished with everlasting destruction. And now, all this admitted, we shall naturally be blind to the necessity and glory of salvation by Jesus Christ. If sin is so trifling an affair, it will seem a strange and incredible thing that God should become incarnate to atone for it: and, hence, we shall be very easily persuaded to consider Christ as only a good man, who came into the world to set us a good example; or, however, that he is not equal with the Father. The freeness and sovereignty of grace also, together with justification by imputed righteousness, will be a very strange sound in our ears. Like the Jews, we shall *go about to establish our own righteousness, and shall not submit to the righteousness of God.* It will seem equally strange and incredible, to be told, that we are by nature, utterly unfit for the kingdom of God, that therefore, we must be born again; that we are so bad, that we cannot even come to Christ for life, except the Father draw us; yea, and that our best doings, after all, are unworthy of God's notice. It will be no wonder, if, instead of receiving these unwelcome and humiliating doctrines, we should coincide with those writers and preachers who think more favourably of our condition, and the condition of the world at large; who either deny eternal punishment to exist, or represent men in general as being in little or no danger of it. And, having avowed these sentiments, it will then become necessary to compliment their abettors, (including ourselves in the number,) as persons of a more rational and liberal way of thinking than other people.

My dear brother, of all things, be this your prayer, *Take not thy holy Spirit from me!* If once we sink into such a way of performing our public work, as not to depend on his enlightening and enlivening influences, we may go on, and probably shall go on, from one degree of evil to another. Knowing how to account for the operations of our own minds, without imputing them to a divine agency, we shall be inclined, in this manner, to account for the operations in the minds of others; and so with numbers in the present age, may soon call in question even *whether there be any Holy Spirit.*

2. Being full of the Holy Spirit will give *a holy tincture to your meditation and preaching.* There is such a thing as the mind be-

ing habitually under the influence of divine things, and retaining so much of a savour of Christ, as that divine truths shall be viewed and expressed, as I may say, in their own language. Spiritual things will be spiritually discerned; and if spiritually discerned will be spiritually communicated. There is more in our manner of thinking and speaking upon divine truth, than, perhaps, at first sight, we are aware of. A great part of the phraseology of scripture is, by some, accounted unfit to be addressed to a modern ear; and is, on this account, to a great degree laid aside, even by those who profess to be satisfied with the sentiments. Whatever may be said in defence of this practice, in a very few instances, such as those where words in a translation are become absolete, or convey a different idea from what they did at the time of being translated; I am satisfied, the practice, in general, is very pernicious. There are many sermons that cannot fairly be charged with untruth, which yet have a tendency to lead off the mind from the simplicity of the gospel. If such scripture terms, for instance, as *holiness*, *godliness*, *grace*, *believers*, *saints*, *communion with God*, &c. should be thrown aside, as savouring too much of cant and enthusiasm; and such terms as *morality*, *virtue*, *religion*, *good men*, *happiness of mind*, &c. substituted in their room, it will have an amazing effect upon the hearers. If such preaching is the gospel, it is the gospel heathenized, and will tend to heathenize the minds of those who deal in it. I do not mean to object to the use of these latter terms, in their place; they are some of them scriptural terms: what I object to is, putting them in the place of others, when discoursing upon evangelical subjects. To be sure, there is a way of handling divine subjects after this sort, that is very clever, and very ingenious; and a minister of such a stamp may commend himself by his ingenuity, to many hearers: but, after all, God's truths are never so acceptable and savoury to a *gracious* heart, as when clothed in their own native phraseology. The more you are filled, my brother with an unction from the Holy One, the greater, relish you will possess for that savoury manner of conveying truth, which is so plentifully exemplified in the holy scriptures. Farther.

3. It is this that will make the doctrines you preach, and the duties you inculcate, seem *fitted in your lips*. I allude to a say-

ing of the wise man ; *The words of the wise are pleasant, if thou keep them within thee ; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.* It is expected, that there should be an agreement between the character of the speaker and the things which are spoken. *Excellent speech becometh not a fool,* Exhortations to holiness come with an ill grace from the lips of one who indulges himself in iniquity. The opposite of this is what I mean by the doctrines and duties of religion being fitted in your lips. It is this that will make your face shine, when you come forth in your public labours, like the face of Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the holy mount.

4. It is this that will give *a spiritual savour to your conversation, in your visits to your friends.* Though religious visits may be abused ; yet you know brother, the necessity there is for them, if you would ascertain the spiritual condition of those to whom you preach. There are many faults also, that you may discover in individuals, which it would be unhandsome, as well as unfriendly, to expose in a pointed manner, in the pulpit, which, nevertheless, ought not to be passed by unnoticed. Here is work for your private visits ; and, in proportion as you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will possess a spirit of love and faithfulness, which is absolutely necessary to successful reproof. It is in our private visits also, that we can be free with our people and they with us. Questions may be asked and answered, difficulties solved, and the concerns of the soul discussed. Paul taught the Ephesians, not only publicly, but *from house to house.* Now, it is being full of the Holy Spirit that will give a spiritual savour to all this conversation. It will be as the holy anointing oil on Aaron's garments, which diffused a savour to all around him.

5. This also will teach you *how you ought to behave yourself in every department you are called to occupy.* It will serve instead of ten thousand rules ; and all rules without it will be of no account. This it is that will teach you to be of a meek, mild, peaceful, humble spirit. It will make such a spirit be natural to you. *As touching brotherly love,* said the Apostle to the Thessalonians. *ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*

6. In short, It is this that will denominate you *the man of God.* Such was Barnabas, and such, my brother, was your predecessor whose memory is dear to many of us ;* and such,according to all that I have heard, was his predecessor, whose memory is equally dear to many here present.† Each, in his day, was a burning and shining light ; but they shine here no more. May you, my brother, and each of us, be followers of them, as they also were of Christ !

Another part of the character of Barnabas is,

III. He was FULL OF FAITH. It may be difficult to ascertain, with precision, the real meaning and extent of this term ; but, I should think, in this connexion, it includes, at least, the three following ideas : having the mind occupied with divine sentiment; being rooted and grounded in the truth of the gospel ; and daily living upon it. The first of these ideas distinguished him from those characters whose minds are void of principle ; the next, from such as are always hovering upon the borders of scepticism ; and the last, from those who, though they have no manner of doubts about the truth of the doctrines of the gospel, yet scarcely ever, if at all, feel their vital influence upon their hearts and lives. Let us review each of these a little more particularly.

1. His mind was *well occupied, or stored, with divine sentiment.* How necessary is this to a gospel minister ! It is to be feared that many young men have rushed into the work of the Lord without any decided principles of their own ; yea, and have not only begun in such a state of mind, but have continued so all through their lives. Alas ! what can the churches expect from such characters ? What can such a void produce ? How can we feed others with knowledge and understanding, if we ourselves are destitute of them ? To say the least, such ministers will be but *unprofitable servants.* But this is not all ; a minister that is not inured to think for him-

* The Rev. David Evans, who was ordained pastor of the Church at Thorn, August 7, 1782, and died February 21, 1787. aged 31.

† The Rev. William Butfield, who was ordained pastor of the Church at Thorn, February 15, 1755, and died March 23, 1778, of the small pox, aged 30.

self, is constantly exposed to every false sentiment, or system, that happens to be presented to him. We sometimes hear of a person *changing his sentiments;* and, doubtless, in many cases, it is jus and right he should change them; but there are cases in which that mode of speaking is very improper; for, in reality some persons have no sentiments of their own to change; they have only changed the sentiments of some one great man for those of another.

2. He had *a firm persuasion of the truth of that gospel which he preached to others.* He was rooted and grounded in the gospel. The great controversy of that day was, whether the gospel was true; whether Jesus was the Messiah; whether he, who so lately expired on the cross, was the Son of God; and whether his death was the way to obtain eternal life. There were great temptations for a person, who should view things through a medium of sense, to think otherwise. The popular opinion went against it. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Those who adhered to the gospel, thereby exposed themselves to cruel persecutions. But Barnabas *was full of faith;* he was decidedly on the Lord's side; he *believed on the Son of God,* and had the *witness* of the truth of his gospel *within himself.*

Preaching the gospel is bearing a *testimony* for God; but we shall never be able to do this to any good purpose, if we be always hesitating and indulging a sceptical disposition. There is no need of a dogmatical, over-bearing temper: but there is need of being rooted and grounded in the truths of God. *Be not carried about* said the Apostle to the Hebrews, *with strange doctrines: it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.* But he elsewhere condemns the character of those who are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

3. That gospel which he preached to others *he himself lived upon. The word preached,* we are told, *did not profit some, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.* This will equally hold good in the case of the preacher, as of the hearer. If we mix not faith with the doctrine we deliver, it will not profit us. Whatever abilities we may possess, and of whatever use we may be made to others, unless we can say, in some sort with the apos-

tle John. *That which we have seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life,—that declare we unto you,* our own souls may, notwithstanding, everlastingly perish! This is a very serious matter; and well deserves our attention, as ministers. Professors, in the age of Barnabas, might be under greater temptations than we are, to question whether Jesus was the true Messiah; but we are under greater temptations than they were, of resting a mere implicit assent to the Christian religion without realizing and living upon its important truths.

The studying of divine truth as *preachers* rather than as *Christians;* or, in other words, studying it for the sake of finding out something to say to others, without so much as thinking of profiting our own souls, is a temptation to which we are more than ordinarily exposed. If we studied divine truths as Christians, our being constantly engaged in the service of God would be friendly to our growth in grace. We should be *like trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth fruit in their season;* and all that we did would be likely to *prosper.* But if we study it only as preachers, it will be the reverse. Our being conversant with the Bible, will be like surgeons and soldiers being conversant with the shedding of human blood, till they lose all sensibility concerning it. I believe it is a fact, that where a preacher is wicked, he is generally the most hardened against conviction of any character whatever. Happy will it be for us, if, like Barnabas, we are *full of faith* in that Saviour whom we recommend, in that gospel which it is our employment to proclaim.

IV. We now come to the last part of the subject, which is held up by way of encouragement: AND MUCH PEOPLE WAS ADDED UNTO THE LORD. When our ministry is blessed to the conversion of sinners, to the bringing them off from their connexion with sin and self, to a vital union with Christ; when our congregations are filled, not merely with professors of religion, but with sound believers; when such believers come forward, and offer themselves willingly for communion, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you;* then it may be said, that *much people is added unto the Lord.* The connexion between such additions,

and eminency in grace and holiness in a minister, deserves our serious attention.

I think it may be laid down as a rule, which both scripture and experience will confirm, that *eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness.* I do not mean to say, our usefulness depends upon our spirituality, as an effect depends upon its cause; nor yet that it is always in proportion to it. God is a sovereign; and frequently sees proper to convince us of it, in variously bestowing his blessing on the means of grace. But yet he is not wanting in giving encouragement to what he approves, wherever it is found. Our want of usefulness is often to be ascribed to our want of spirituality, much oftener than to our want of talents. God has frequently been known to succeed men of inferior abilities, when they have been eminently holy, while he has blasted others of much superior talents, when that has been wanting. Hundreds of ministers, who, on account of their gifts, have promised to be shining characters, have proved the reverse, and all owing to such things as pride, unwatchfulness, carnality, and levity.

Eminency in grace, my brother, will contribute to your success in three ways.

1. It will fire your soul with *holy love to Christ, and the souls of men;* and such a spirit is usually attended with success. I believe you will find, that, in almost all the great works which God has wrought, in any period of time, he has honoured men of this character, by making them his instruments. In the midst of a sore calamity upon the murmuring Israelites, when God was inclined to show mercy, it was by the means of his servant Aaron running with a censer of fire in his hand, and standing between the living and the dead! The great reformation that was brought about in the days of Hezekiah, was by the instrumentality of a man *who wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God:* and then it follows, *And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God,* HE DID IT WITH ALL HIS HEART, *and* PROSPERED.

There was another great reformation in the Jewish church, about the time of their return from Babylon. One of the chief instruments in this work was Ezra, *a ready scribe in the law of his God;* a man who had *prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments;* a man who *fasted and prayed at the river Ahava,* previous to his great undertaking; a man who was afterwards *sorely astonished, and in heaviness, and would eat no meat, nor drink water, but fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, on account of the transgressions of the people.* Another great instrument in this work was Nehemiah, a man that devoted himself wholly to the service of God and his people, labouring night and day; and was not to be seduced by the intrigues of God's adversaries, nor yet intimidated, by their threatenings; but preserved in his work till it was finished, closing his labours with this solemn prayer and appeal, *Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.*

Time would fail me to speak of all the great souls, both inspired and uninspired, whom the King of kings has delighted to honour: of Paul, and Peter, and their companions; of Wickliff, and Luther, and Calvin, and many others at the Reformation; of Elliot, and Edwards, and Brainerd, and Whitefield, and hundreds more, whose names are held in deserved esteem in the church of God. These were men of God; men who had great grace, as well as gifts; whose hearts burned in love to Christ and the souls of men. They looked upon their hearers, as their Lord had done upon Jerusalem, and wept over them. In this manner they delivered their messages; *and much people was added unto the Lord.*

2. Eminency in grace will *direct your ends to the glory of God, and the welfare of men's souls;* and where this is the case, it is usually attended with a blessing. These are ends which God himself pursues; and, if we pursue the same, we are *labourers together with God,* and may hope for his blessing to attend our labours; but, if we pursue separate and selfish ends, we walk contrary to God, and may expect that God will walk contrary to us. Whatever apparent success may attend a man's labours, whose ends are evil, all is to be suspected: either the success is not gen-

uine, or, if it be, it is not in a way of blessing upon him, nor shall it turn out, at last, to his account. It must be an inexpressible satisfaction, brother, to be able to say as the primitive ministers and apostles did: *James, a servant of God: Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ; We seek not yours, but you.*

3. Eminency in grace will enable you to *bear prosperity in your ministry without being lifted up with it; and so contribute towards it.* It is written of Christ, in prophecy, *He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall* BEAR *the glory.* He does bear it indeed; but to bear glory, without being elated, is no easy thing for us. I am often afraid lest this should be one considerable reason why most of us have no more real success in our work than we have; perhaps, it is not safe for us to be much owned of God; perhaps, we have not grace enough to bear prosperity.

My dear brother, permit me to conclude with a word or two of serious advice. First, *Watch over your own soul, as well as the souls of your people.* Do not forget that ministers are peculiarly liable, while they keep the vineyard of others, to neglect their own. Farther, *Know your own weakness, and depend upon Christ's all sufficiency.* Your work is great, your trials may be many; but let not your heart be discouraged. Remember what was said to the apostle Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weekness;* and the reflection which he makes upon it, *When I am weak, then am I strong.* Finally, *Be often looking to the end of your course, and viewing yourself as giving an account of your stewardship.* We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and give account of the deeds done in the body. Perhaps there is no thought more solemn than this, more suitable to be kept in view in all our undertakings, more awakening in a thoughtless hour, or more cheering to an upright heart.

I have only to request, my dear brother, that you will excuse the freedom of this plain address. I have not spoken so much to instruct you in things which you know not, as to remind and impress you with things which you already know. The Lord bless you, and grant that the solemnities of this day may ever be remembered with satisfaction, both by you and your people!

THE INSTANCES, THE EVIL NATURE, AND THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF DELAY, IN THE CONCERNS OF RELIGION.

SERMON III.

[Preached at Clipstone Ministers' Meeting, April 27, 1791.]

HAGGAI i. 2.

Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

WHEN the children of Judah were delivered from their captivity, and allowed, by the proclamation of Cyrus, to return to their own land, one of the principal things which attracted their attention was, the rebuilding of the house of God, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. This was a work which Cyrus himself enjoined, and upon which the hearts of the people were fixed. It was not, however, to be accomplished at once; and, as the worship of God was a matter of immediate and indispensable concern, they set up an *altar*, on which to offer sacrifices and offerings, till such time as the temple should be built.

In the second year after their return, the foundation of the Lord's house was laid; but, opposition being made to it, by the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, the work ceased all the days of Cyrus, until the reign of Darius, commonly distinguished by the

name of Darius-Hystaspis. During this period, which seems to have been about fourteen years, the people sunk into a spirit of indifference. At first they desisted, from necessity; but afterwards, their attention being turned to the building and ornamenting of houses for themselves, they seemed very well contented that the house of the Lord should lie waste. For this their temper and conduct, the land was smitten with barrenness; so that both the vintage and the harvest failed them. God also raised up Haggai and Zechariah to go and remonstrate against their supineness; and the efforts of these two prophets were the means of stirring up the people to resume the work.

The argument which the people used against building the house of God was, that *the time was not come*. It is possible, they waited for a counter-order from the Persian court; if so, they might have waited long enough. A work of that nature ought to have been prosecuted of their own accord; at least, they should have tried. It did not follow, because they were hindered once, that therefore they should never succeed. Or, perhaps, they meant to plead their present weakness and poverty. Something like this seems to be implied in the 4th verse, where they are reminded, that they had strength enough to build and ornament houses for themselves. It looks as if they wished to build, and lay by, fortunes for themselves and their families, and *then*, at some *future* time, they might contribute for the building of the house of God.

There is something of this procrastinating spirit that runs through a great part of our life, and is of great detriment to us in the work of God. We know of many things that should be done, and cannot, in conscience, directly oppose them; but still we find excuses for our inactivity. While we admit that many things should be done, which are not done, we are apt to quiet ourselves with the thought that they need not be done *just now: The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.*

In discoursing to you upon the subject, brethren, I shall take notice of a few of the most remarkable cases in which this spirit is discovered; and then endeavour to show its evil nature, and dangerous tendency.

I. IN RESPECT TO THE CASES, OR INSTANCES, IN WHICH IT IS DISCOVERED. A small degree of observation on mankind, and of reflection upon the workings of our own hearts, will furnish us with many of these ; and convince us of its great influence on every description of men, in almost all their religious concerns.

1. It is by this plea that *a great part of mankind a e constantly deceiving themselves in respect to a serious attention to the concerns of their souls.* These are, doubtless, of the last importance ; and there are times in which most men not only acknowledge this truth, but, in some sort, feel the force of it. This is the case, especially, with those who have had a religious education, and have been used to attend upon the preaching of the gospel. They hear from the pulpit, that men *must* be born again, *must* be converted, and become as little children, or never enter into the kingdom of God. Or the same things are impressed upon them by some threatening affliction or alarming providence. They feel themselves, at those times, very unhappy ; and it is not unusual for them to resolve upon a sacrifice of their former sins, and a serious and close attention, in future, to the affairs of their souls. They think, while under these impressions, they *will* consider their ways, they *will* enter their closets, and shut to the door, and pray to the Lord that he would have mercy upon them ; but, alas, no sooner do they retire from the house of God, or recover from their affliction, than the impression begins to subside, and then matters of this sort become less welcome to the mind. They must not be utterly rejected ; but are let alone *for the present.* As conscience becomes less alarmed, and danger is viewed at a greater distance, the sinner, by degrees, recovers himself from his fright, and dismisses his religious concern, in some such manner as Felix did his reprover, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*

It is thus with the ardent *youth:* in the hour of serious reflection, he feels that religion is of importance ; but his heart, still averse from what his conscience recommends, rises against the thought of sacrificing the prime of life to the gloomy duties of prayer and self-denial. He does not resolve *never* to attend to these things ; but the *time* does not seem to be come. He hopes

that the Almighty will excuse him a *few years*, at least, and impute his excesses to youthful folly and imbecility. It is thus with the *man of business:* there are times in which he is obliged to retire from the hurry of life; and, at those times, thoughts of another life may arrest his attention. Conscience, at those intervals, may smite him for his living without prayer, without reflection, without God in all his thoughts; and what is his remedy? Does he lament his sin, and implore mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ? No, nor so much as promise to forsake it *immediately*: but *this* he promises; that, when *this* busy time is over, and *that* favourite point is gained, and *those* intricate affairs are terminated, *then* it shall be otherwise. It is thus with persons in *single life:* they will be better when they get settled in the world. It is thus with the *encumbered parent:* she looks forward to the time when her family shall get off her hands. It is thus with the *drunkard* and the *debauchee:* wearied in their own way, they intend to lead a new life, as soon as they can but shake off their old connexions.

In short, it is thus with great numbers in all our towns and villages and congregations: they put off the great concern to *another time*, and think they may venture, at least, a little longer; till all is over with them, and a dying hour just awakens them, like the virgins in the parable, to bitter reflection on their own fatal folly.

2. This plea not only affects the unconverted, but *prevents us all from undertaking any great or good work for the cause of Christ, or the good of mankind.* We see many things that should be done; but there are difficulties in the way, and we wait for the removal of these difficulties. We are very apt to indulge a kind of prudent caution, (as we call it,) which foresees and magnifies difficulties beyond what they really are. It is granted, there may be such things in the way of an undertaking, as may render it impracticable; and, in that case, it is our duty, for the present, to stand still: but it becomes us to beware, lest we account that impracticable which only requires such a degree of exertion as we are not inclined to give it. Perhaps the work requires *expense;* and Covetousness says, Wait a little longer, till I have gained so and so in trade, till I have rendered my circumstances respectable, and settled my children comforta-

bly in the world. But is not this like ceiling our own houses, while the house of God lies waste? Perhaps it requires *concurrence;* and we wait for every body to be of a mind, which is never to be expected. He who, through a dread of opposition and reproach, desists from known duty, is in danger of being found among the *fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable.*

Had Luther and his cotemporaries acted upon this principle, they had never gone about the glorious work of the Reformation. When he saw the abominations of Popery, he might have said, 'These things ought not to be; but what can *I* do? If the chief priests and rulers, in different nations, would but unite, something might be effected; but what can *I* do, an individual, and a poor man? I may render myself an object of persecution, or which is worse, of universal contempt; and what good end will be answered by it?' Had Luther reasoned thus; had he fancied, that, because princes and prelates were not the first to engage in the good work, therefore the time was not come to build the house of the Lord; the house of the Lord, for any thing he had done, might have lain waste to this day.

Instead of waiting for the removal of difficulties, we ought, in many cases, to consider them as purposely laid in our way, in order to try the sincerity of our religion. He who had all power in heaven and earth, could not only have sent forth his apostles into all the world, but have so ordered it that all the world should treat them with kindness, and aid them in their mission; but, instead of that, he told them to lay their accounts with persecution, and the loss of all things. This was, no doubt, to try their sincerity; and the difficulties laid in our way are equally designed to try ours.

Let it be considered, whether it is not owing to this principle, that so few and so feeble efforts have been made for the propagation of the gospel in the world. When the Lord Jesus commissioned his apostles, he commanded them to go and teach *all nations,* to preach the gospel to *every creature;* and that, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions that would lie in the way. The apostles executed their commission with assiduity and fidelity; but, since their days, we seem to sit down half contented that the

greater part of the world should still remain in ignorance and idolatry. Some noble efforts, indeed, have been made; but they are small in number, when compared with the magnitude of the object. And why is it so? Are the souls of men of less value than heretofore? No. Is Christianity less true or less important than in former ages? This will not be pretended. Are there no opportunities for societies or individuals in Christian nations, to convey the gospel to the heathen? This cannot be pleaded, so long as opportunities are found to trade with them, yea, and, (what is a disgrace to the name of Christians,) to buy them, and sell them, and treat them with worse than savage barbarity! We have opportunities in abundance: the improvement of navigation, and the maritime and commercial turn of this country, furnish us with these; and it deserves to be considered, whether this is not a circumstance that renders it a duty peculiarly binding on us.

The truth is, if I am not mistaken, we wait for we know not what; we seem to think *the time is not come, the time for the Spirit to be poured down from on high.* We *pray* for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet *neglect the ordinary means* by which those ends have been used to be accomplished. It pleased God, heretofore, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed; and there is reason to think it will still please God to work by that distinguished means. Ought we not, then, at least, to try, by some means, to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us, than has hitherto been conveyed? The encouragement to the Heathen is still in force. WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD, SHALL BE SAVED; but *how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?*

Let it be farther considered, whether it is not owing to this principle, that so few and so feeble efforts are made for the propagation of the gospel *in places within our reach.* There are many dark places in our own land, places where priests and people, it is to be feared, are alike destitute of true religion, *all looking to their own way,* every one for *his gain from his quarter.*

Were every friend of Jesus Christ to avail himself of that liberty which the laws of his country allow him, and embrace every opportunity for the dissemination of evangelical principles, what effects might we hope to see? Were every true minister of the gospel to make a point of preaching, as often as possible, in the villages within his reach; and did those private Christians who are situated in such villages open their doors for preaching, and recommend the gospel by a holy and affectionate behaviour; might we not hope to see the wilderness become as a fruitful field? Surely, in these matters we are too negligent. And when we do preach to the unconverted, we do not feel as if we were to do any good. We are as if we knew not how to get at the hearts and consciences of people. We cast the net, without so much as expecting a draught. We are as those who cannot find their hands in the day of battle; who go forth, not like men inured to conquest, but rather like those inured to defeat. Whence arises all this? Is it not owing, at least a considerable degree of it, to a notion we have, that *the time is not come* for any thing considerable to be effected?

3. It is this plea that keeps many from *a public profession of religion by a practical acknowledgment of Christ.* Christ requires of his followers, that they confess his name before men; that they be baptized; and commemorate his dying love in the ordinance of the Supper. Yet there are many who consider themselves as Christians, and are considered so by others, who still live in the neglect of these ordinances. I speak not now of those who consider themselves as having been baptized in their infancy, but of such as admit the immersion of believers to be the only true baptism, and yet do not practise it, nor hold communion with any particular church of Christ. It is painful to think, there should be a description of professed Christians who live in the neglect of Christ's commands. What can be the motives of such neglect? Probably they are various: there is one, however, that must have fallen under your observation; that is, *the want of some powerful impression upon the mind, impelling them, as it were, to a compliance.* Many persons wait for something of this sort, and because they go from year to year without it, conclude that *the time is not come*: or that it is not the mind of God that *they* should comply

with those ordinances; at least, that they should comply with them *at present*. Impressions, it is allowed, are desirable, provided it be truth or duty that is impressed; otherwise, they deserve no regard: but, be they as desirable as they may, the want of them can never justify our living in the neglect of known duty. Nor are they at all adapted to show us *what is duty*, but merely to excite to the performance of that which may be proved to be duty without them. We might as well wait for impressions, and conclude, from the want of them, that the time is not come for the performance of other duties, as those of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Some are kept from a public profession of Christ's name by mere mercenary motives. They have relations and friends that would be offended. The fear of being disinherited, or injured, in some sort, as to worldly circumstances, has made many a person keep his principles to himself, till such time as the party whose displeasure he fears shall be removed out of the way. This is wicked; as it amounts to a denial of Christ before men, and will, no doubt, expose the party, if he die without repentance for it, to being denied by Christ before his Father, at the last day. *Lord*, said one, *I will follow thee, but let me first go and bury my father.* —*Let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home*, says another; *Jesus answered, Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me.—No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

4. It is this plea that keeps us from *a thorough self-examination, and self-denial.* The importance of being right in the sight of God, and our liability to err, even in the greatest of all concerns, render a close and frequent inquiry into our spiritual state absolutely necessary: It is a dangerous, as well as an uncomfortable life, to be always in suspense; not knowing what, nor where we are, nor whither we are going. There are seasons, too, in which we feel the importance of such an inquiry, and think we *will* go about it, we *will* search and try our ways, and turn from our sins, and walk more closely with God. Such thoughts will occur when we hear matters urged home upon us from the pulpit, or when some affecting event draws off our attention from the present

world, and causes us to reflect upon ourselves for our inordinate anxiety after it. We think of living otherwise than we have done; but, when we come to put our thoughts into execution, we find a number of difficulties in the way, which too often deter us, at least, *for the present.* 'Here is an undertaking that must first be accomplished, before I can *have time*; here is also a troublesome affair that I must get through, before I can *be composed*; and then, here are such temptations that I know not how to get over *just now:* if I wait a little longer, perhaps they may be removed.' Alas! alas! thus we befool ourselves; thus we defer it to another time, till the impressions on our minds are effaced, and then we are less able to attend to those things than we were at first. As one who puts off the examination of his accounts, and the retrenchment of his expenses, till, all on a sudden, he is involved in a bankruptcy; so do multitudes, in the religious world, neglect a close inspection into the concerns of their souls, till, at length, either a departure from some of the great principles of the gospel, or some foul and open fall, is the consequence.

5. It is this principle that keeps us from *preparedness for death, and thus being ready when our Lord shall come.* There is nothing that Christ has more forcibly enjoined than this duty: *Be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.—What I say unto you I say unto all, watch.* Why do we not immediately feel the force of these charges, and betake ourselves to habitual watchfulness and prayer, and self-denial, and walking with God? Why are we not as men who wait for the coming of their Lord? Is it not from a secret thought, that *the time is not come?* We know we must die, but we consider it as something at a distance; and thus, imagining that our Lord delayeth his coming, we delay to prepare to meet him, so that when he cometh he findeth us in confusion. Instead of our loins being girt, and our lights burning, we are engaged in a number of plans and pursuits, to the neglect of those things, which, notwithstanding the necessary avocations of life, ought always to engross our supreme attention.

Let us next proceed to consider,

II. THE EVIL NATURE, AND DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF THIS PROCRASTINATING TEMPER.

I need not say much to prove to you that it is a sin. The conscience of every one of you will assist me in that part of the work. It is proper, however, in order that you may feel it the more forcibly, that you should consider wherein its evil nature consists.

1. It is *contrary to the tenor of all God's commandments.* All through the scriptures we are required to attend to divine things immediately, and without delay. *Work while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work.—To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.—While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.—Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

God not only requires us, in general, to do what we do quickly, but calls us to serve him particularly *under those temptations or afflictions* which we find placed in our way. The terms of discipleship are, *Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me.* He does not call upon us to follow him barely when there are no troubles, nor difficulties to encounter, nor allow us, when those difficulties occur, to wait a fairer opportunity; but to take our cross, as it were, upon our shoulders, and *so* follow him. It would be of use for us to consider every situation as a post in which God has placed us, and *in which* he calls upon us to serve and glorify him. If we are poor, we are required to glorify God by contentment; if afflicted, by patience; if bereaved, by submission; if persecuted, by firmness; if injured, by forgiveness; or if tempted, by denying ourselves for his sake. Nor can these duties be performed at other times; to put them off, therefore, to another opportunity, is the same thing, in effect, as refusing to comply with them at all.

2. To put off things to another time, *implies a lurking dislike to the things themselves.* We do not ordinarily do so, except in things wherein we have no delight. Whatever our hearts are set upon, we are for losing no time till it is accomplished. If the people of Judah had *had a mind to work,* as is said of them on another occasion, they would not have pleaded that the time was not come. Sinful delay, therefore, arises from *alienation of heart from God;* than which nothing can be more offensive in his sight.

But, farther, it is not only a sin, but a sin of *dangerous tendency.* This is manifest by the effects it produces. Precious time is thereby murdered, and valuable opportunities lost, and lost beyond recal!

That there are opportunities possessed, both by saints and sinners, is plain from the scriptures. The former might do abundantly more for God than they do, and might enjoy much more of God and heaven than they actually enjoy; and no doubt it would be so, were it not for that idle, delaying temper, of which we have spoken. Like the Israelites, we are slothful to go up to possess the good land. Many are the opportunities, both of doing and enjoying good, that have already passed by. O! what Christians might we have been before now, had we but availed ourselves of all those advantages which the gospel dispensation and the free exercise of our religion afford us!

Sinners also, as long as life lasts, have opportunity of escaping from the wrath to come. Hence, they are exhorted to *seek the Lord while he may be found* and to *call upon him while he is near.* Hence, also, there is a *door* represented as being at present, *open*; which the master of the house will, one day, *rise up and shut.* The *fountain* is described as being at present, *open for sin and for uncleanness;* but there is a period approaching when it shall be said, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still!* It seems scarcely in the power of language to express the danger of delay in terms more forcible and impressive than those which are used in the above passages. Nor is there any thing in the idea that clashes with the scripture doctrine of decrees. All allow that men have opportunity, in natural things, to do what they do not, and to obtain what they obtain not; and, if this can be made to consist with an universal providence, which *performeth the things that are appointed for us;* why should not the other be allowed to consist with the purposes of him who does nothing without a plan, but *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?* A price is in the hands of those who have no heart to get wisdom.

O thoughtless sinner! trifle no longer with the murder of time; time, so short and uncertain in its duration; the morning of your existence; the mould in which you receive an impression for

eternity, the only period in which the Son of man has power to forgive sins! Should the remaining part of your life pass away in the same careless manner as that has which has already elapsed, what bitter reflection must needs follow! How cutting it must be to look back on all the means of salvation as gone for ever; the harvest past, the summer ended, and you not saved!

Suppose a company, at the time of low water, should take an excursion upon the sands near the sea shore: suppose yourself of the company: suppose, that, on a presumption of the tide's not returning at present, you should all fall asleep: suppose all the company, except yourself, to awake out of their sleep, and, finding their danger, endeavour to awake you, and persuade you to flee with them for your life: but you, like the sluggard, are for *a little more sleep, and a little more slumber:* The consequence is your companions escape, but you are left behind to perish in the waters, which, regardless of all your cries, rise and overwhelm you! What a situation would this be! How would you curse that love of sleep that made you refuse to be awaked, that delaying temper that wanted to indulge a little longer! But what is this situation compared with that of a lost soul? There will come a period when the bottom of the ocean would be deemed a refuge; when, to be crushed under falling rocks and mountains, instead of being viewed with terror as heretofore, will be earnestly desired! Yes, desired, but desired in vain! The sinner who has *neglected the great salvation* will not be able to *escape*, nor hide himself *from the ace of him that sitteth upon the throne, nor from the wrath of the Lamb.*

My dear hearers! Consider your condition without delay. God says to you, *To-day* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. *To-day* may be the only day you have to live. Go home, enter the closet, and shut to the door; confess your sins; implore mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!*

SERMON IV.

[Preached at Kettering, at the funeral of Mr. Beeby Wallis, April, 1792.]

Rev. xiv. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.

It is usual with us, on the death of our friends, to improve the mournful event, by a sermon on the occasion. I feel a difficulty, in the present instance, on account of my near and intimate connexion with the deceased. However, as well as I can, I will endeavour to comply with the general expectation.

Our dear deceased friend made no mention of any particular part of scripture which he would wish to have improved; I have, therefore selected the above, as being the most suitable to the present occasion of any that has occurred to my thoughts. The original design of the passage seems to have been, to support the afflicted followers of Christ in times of persecution. Nothing could be better adapted to arm the holy martyrs against the terrors of death, than the sentiment here exhibited. It does not seem, however to be applicable to martyrs only ; but is rather to be considered as a

general truth, which, though applied to a particular case, is not to be confined to that case, but extended to every other particular comprehended within the general design. A few introductory observations may throw some light upon the text, and lead us on to the principal subjects on which I mean to discourse.

First: Let us observe *the character* described—*those who die in the Lord.* The scriptures make frequent mention of believers, as being united to Christ or one with him. If we be true believers in Christ, we shall feel a union of heart with him; our principles, affections and pursuits, will, in a measure, be the same as his; his cause will be our cause, his people our people, his service our delight, and the gospel of salvation through his death our daily bread. The union between Christ and his people, is frequently compared to the marriage-union: as they who were twain became *one flesh, so they who are joined to the Lord are one spirit;* and, as in that case there is not only a mental, but a legal union, each becoming interested in the persons and possessions of the other, so in this, we, with all we have, are Christ's, and Christ, with all he has, is ours. Hence the language of the Apostle: *Of him are ye* IN *Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* Hence also, arises the desirableness of being *found* IN *him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* An union like this will render us blessed even in death; death itself shall not be able to dissolve it, but shall rather introduce us to the full enjoyment of him whom our soul loveth.

It is farther supposed of those who die in the Lord, that they have abounded in *good works;* for it could not otherwise have been said that they should *follow them.* Those whose only hope and reliance for acceptance with God have been upon Jesus Christ, and who have, therefore, disclaimed all dependence upon their own works, have often been charged with being enemies to morality; or, at least, that their principles, if pursued to their just consequences, would render them so: but I trust the practice of these persons, in all ages, has not been such as to justify the charge. Perhaps, on the contrary, if we could survey the spirit

and manners of mankind with an impartial eye, we might find that they who thus believed in Jesus were the most careful to maintain good works. Yea, and if we would search the scriptures with an unprejudiced mind, we should find, that, without an union with Christ, it were a vain thing to expect good works ; (truly so called ;) as vain as to expect fruit from a branch that should be separate from the vine.

Secondly : The blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord, was declared by *a voice from heaven.* If the Apostle had hearkened to the general voice of mankind, he would have heard a very different sound. The world reckons him blessed that liveth—that liveth in prosperity. So natural is this to man, that we all feel a kind of pity for our departed friends; but surely pity is never more unnecessary : the voice from heaven, whatever be the voice from earth, pronounces, *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.*

Thirdly : The apostle was commanded to *write* it. A mere voice passeth away, but a writing endureth. In this we see God's tender regard for his faithful servants, not merely in that age, but for ages to come.

Fourthly : Their blessedness is declared to be *from henceforth.* I do not see how this can be understood as referring to the time of the Spirit's speaking ; for that would imply, that, before that time, those who died in the Lord were not blessed. It seems, I think, plainly to refer to *the time of their departure from the body*, and is one of the many passages of scripture in which we are taught the doctrine of a separate state.

Lastly : The blessedness which awaits those who die in the Lord consists, partly in a *rest from their labours*, and partly in a glorious *reward*, expressed by *their works following them.*

It is on this last observation I shall principally enlarge, in this discourse, as the most important ideas of the text seem to be here included. Let us first take a view of the heavenly state under the ideas here given, and then consider the uses that such a prospect is adapted to promote.

I. LET US VIEW THE HEAVENLY STATE UNDER THE IDEAS OF A REST FROM LABOUR, AND A REWARD FOR IT. The term *labour* does not convey the idea of simple exercise ; for we shall never cease

from that, but rather increase it. The inhabitants of heaven are more active than ever they were upon earth. They are represented as *serving God day and night in his temple;* yea, and as though all our services in this world were unworthy of the name, it is said, *there his servants shall serve him.* Nor is the *rest* here spoken of to be understood of a mere cessation from exercise, in the grave, for that would afford no *blessedness.* The term labour conveys the idea of *painful exercise*, *weariness*, or *fatigue.* The same word is used in 2 Cor. xi. 29. where the Apostle speaks of being in *weariness* and *painfulness.*

A great part of the Christian life consists in *an opposition.* He that would gain the heavenly prize must oppose *the course of this world;* must strive against the stream of false principles and wicked practices; against the evil customs and manners of the age and place in which he lives. It has been observed, that mankind go through the world in a body; that they draw one another on, in their principles and manners; that, like the drops of water which compose a tide, they acquire strength and influence by their numbers, and that, whatever general direction they take, that is, for the time being, *the course of this world.* Like the tide, it is ever rolling, though not in the same direction. In former ages, it was a course of Pagan idolatry; in latter ages, of Popish superstition and cruelty; and, in the present age, it is a course of Infidelity and profaneness. To oppose this current is labour.

It was no small matter for the glorious tribes of martyrs in every age, to hold fast the faith of the gospel. They had not only to encounter their adversaries, but their own natural feelings. They were men, and men of like passions with ourselves. They had wives, and children, and friends, and the various endearing ties of human nature; each of which would cry in their ears *Spare thyself!* Think, brethren, what labour it must have been, for them to encounter the hardships and cruelties to which a faithful adherence to God exposed them! Nor is it any small matter to set ourselves against the *temptations* of the world, there is a fashion in every thing, even in religion; and it requires fortitude of mind to withstand its influence, and to adhere to the dictates of scripture, let them be stigmatized as they may. Nor does it re-

quire less fortitude to withstand the current of evil customs, by which we may be certain, in many cases to expose ourselves to scorn and contempt. These things, I say, are labour; labour from which those who die in the Lord are at rest. The course of this world has no longer any influence on them; they are arrived in the desired haven, where neither tide nor tempest can affect them.

Again: Our services for God, in the present state, may, very properly, be called labour, on account of *the natural infirmities and afflictions* which here attend us, *especially in the last stages of life.* The most active Christan, whose delight in his Lord's work has been such as to render it its own reward, will soon find the years draw nigh, in which he shall say, I have no pleasure in them. It is then that the strength is labour and sorrow. It is then that the spirit is often willing, when the flesh is weak. Our dear deceased friend experienced much of this, during the last few years of his life. Reading and prayer, and every other religious duty, was a labour; but the tabernacle in which he groaned is now dissolved; he is now at rest from his labours.

Once more: The greatest and most grievous struggle of all is owing to *our own native depravity.* It is this that forms the most dangerous stream against which we have to strive. We may withdraw ourselves from the world, but not from this; this will accompany us in all our retirements, and in all our efforts. He that is contented to serve the Lord with mere bodily exercise, may feel no manner of difficulty from this quarter; but he that would worship God in spirit and in truth, that would meditate, pray, praise, preach, or hear, as he ought, will find it the great burden of his life. A mind prone to forget God, and wander in forbidden paths; an heart unaffected with the great things of God, flying off from him and fixing upon things that do not profit; these are matters which made an Apostle exclaim, *O wretched man that I am!* It is these which render our life a labour. To be at rest from these, is heaven indeed!

But another idea afforded us of the heavenly state is, that of a *reward.* Those who die in the Lord, not only rest from their labours, but *their works do follow them.* It has been a common ob-

servation on this passage, and, for ought I know, a just one, that their works are not said to *go before them*, as a ground of justification; but to *follow them*, as witnesses in their favour. I apprehend, however, they will not only follow them as witnesses, but will have place among the intermediate causes of their felicity. It is true, they will constitute no part of our title to eternal life; that is the *free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;* but, a title to admission being thus conferred, they will contribute to augment our bliss. The scriptures every where teach us, that the services and sufferings of the faithful shall meet with a divine *reward;* which, though not of debt, but of grace, is, nevertheless, a reward; which it could not be, if what was enjoyed in the life to come, had no relation to what was done in the present life.

God will reward his servants, at the last day, with his public approbation before an assembled world. *The king shall say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye cloth ed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Nor shall their works stop here; but shall follow them into the heavenly state itself, and furnish matter of joyful recollection for ever; affording a kind of measure according to which their reward in heaven will be conferred. The whole current of scripture appears, to me, to teach us, that there will be degrees of happiness, as well as of misery, in the future state; and that those who have served the Lord with the greatest fidelity and zeal in this world, will enjoy the greatest portion of mental bliss in the world to come. If the labours which we here endure have a tendency to meeten us for the heavenly rest; if present bitters will render future sweet the sweeter; and, if it is thus that our *light affliction, which is but for a moment,* WORKETH FOR US *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* it must, then, follow, that there will be some proportion between our present labours and our future enjoyments. I mean, it cannot be supposed, that those who have laboured but little for God will enjoy an equal portion of felicity with those who have laboured much.

Upon no other principle, that I can see, can we understand those passages of scripture which exhort us to *lay up treasure in heaven; to lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come;* which encourage us under reproaches and persecutions for the name of Christ, saying, *great is your reward in heaven;* and which warn us, saying, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.— He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* We see here, that laying out ourselves for God is laying up treasure in heaven, and that everlasting life is a harvest that will grow out of the seed sown to the Spirit.

Some serious people have demurred upon this subject, lest it should effect the doctrine of salvation by grace, and encourage boasting. Indeed, if those works which follow us into the heavenly state were to be ascribed to us as their first cause, and were considered as the proper meritorious ground of our reward, there would be weight in the objection; but if it be the Lord who has *wrought all our works in us*, and if the reward with which he is pleased to crown them be a matter of grace, and not of debt, where then is boasting? It is only God's graciously rewarding his own work. If ten thousand crowns were placed upon the Christian's head, he would cast them immediately at his Redeemer's feet, saying, *Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory.*

It is through the intimate union between Christ and believers, that they are not only accepted in him, but what they do for Christ is accepted also, and rewarded for his sake. *The Lord had respect unto Abel,* AND TO HIS OFFERING. We are not only *accepted in the beloved*, but our *sacrifices* become *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* As there is no sin so great, but God, for Christ's sake, can forgive it; no blessing so great, but he can bestow it; so there is no service so small, if done from love to him, but he

will reward it. *A cup of cold water, given to a disciple, because he belongs to him*, will insure *a disciple's reward.*

God's graciously connecting blessings with the obedience of his people, serves to show, not only his love to his Son, and to them, but also his love to holiness and righteousness. A father may design to give an inheritance to his child, and various other accommodations ; he may design also to fit him, as much as may be, for the enjoyment of what he has to bestow upon him. On this principle, he will connect almost every gift, or favour that he confers, with some act of filial duty. It is easy to see, in this case, that the father does not consider these things as the child's due upon the footing of merit ; for all that he did was simply his duty : but love to his child induced him to give ; and love to diligence, obedience, and good order, induced him to give it in such a manner. It is thus that God gives grace and glory. It is thus that, in this life, *finding* is connected with *seeking*, *forgiveness* with *confession*, and *salvation* with *believing* ; and, in the life to come, eternal glory with suffering, warring, and overcoming. It is thus that God displays, at the same time, the freeness of his grace, and his love of righteousness and good order. Grace reigns in a way of righteousness through the whole system of salvation. Those that are saved shall be sufficiently convinced that it is all of grace ; while, on the other hand, all shall see the equity and fitness of the divine proceedings, in judging every man according to his works.

But I proceed to consider.

II. THE USES THAT THIS TWO-FOLD IDEA OF THE HEAVENLY STATE IS ADAPTED TO PROMOTE. All divine truth has a tendency to do us good, and the sentiments taught us in this passage are adapted to our present situation.

1. A rest for those who die in the Lord, may *reconcile us to the loss of our dearest Christian friends, seeing they are gone to the possession of it, and are from henceforth blessed.* When our Lord Jesus was about to leave the world, and his disciples we overmuch dejected at the thought of his going, he told them, *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I ;* which is as if he had said, ' The glory and happiness which my Father possesses, and which I go to possess with

him, is greater than any thing I can here enjoy ; if, therefore, ye loved me in a proper manner, instead of weeping at my departure, surely ye would rejoice at it. If the love that we bear to our Christian friends were but properly directed, if our minds were but capacious enough to take all things into consideration, we should mingle joy with all our mourning, on their account.

2. A *rest* before us, may *reconcile us who are left behind, to all the labours and pains and weariness of life.* We need not tire, or want to sit down here ; there will be time enough to rest us by and by. Nor need we be discouraged with all the trials of the present state. What, though it were *in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness*, that we had to pass the remainder of our days ? What, though bonds and afflictions should abide us ? The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. The rest that remains will make us, like Joseph, *forget all our toil, and all our father's house ;* so forget it, however, as never to think of it any more, but with joy and thankfulness.

3. The glorious *reward* before us, may *stimulate us to work for God, with all our might, while life continues.* It is affecting to consider what we are doing in this life as the seeds of an eternal harvest. Let us keep this thought habitually in view. There is a way of turning the ills of life into good, yea, an everlasting good. Every temptation to evil that accosts us is a price put into our hands ; it affords us an opportunity of proving our love to God, by denying ourselves, in that instance, for his sake. The same may be said of afflictions ; they afford us an opportunity for the exercise of patience, and acquiescence in the will of God; and what a harvest of joy such things may issue in, is beyond our capacity to conceive. Perhaps, it was under some such views as these, that the primitive Christians were used to *rejoice in tribulation*, and were exhorted to *count it all joy, when they fell into divers temptations.*

4. If our works will follow us, we have reason to *tremble, as well as rejoice.* The works of those who die *out of Christ*, as well as the others, will follow them. Their life is a seed-time, and they also will receive a harvest. All men have their opportunities, their temptations, and their afflictions ; and they will work in

some way, either as a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death; either as an eternal weight of glory, or of infamy and misery.

But what shall I say in immediate reference to the present melancholy occasion? I wish I could say something that might have a tendency to comfort those that mourn. We have all sustained a heavy loss. The town has lost one that sought its welfare; the poor have lost a benefactor; the church of which he was a member and an officer, has lost one the study of whose life it was to promote its prosperity; those who had the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with him have lost a steady, faithful, and judicious friend; and you, my friend, the partner of his life, you have sustained a heavier loss than any of us. But let us try and consider, the loss is not so great, but that it might have been greater. We have not to sorrow as those that have no hope. Our grief is confined to ourselves. We have no cause to weep on his account. This is a thought which, though frequently mentioned on such occasions as these, yet can never be sufficiently realized. To bury a Christian friend, is nothing in comparison of burying those relations of whose piety we have no well-grounded satisfaction. Add to this, the mercy of God in not taking him away in the prime of life and health and usefulness. He had been removed ten or twelve, or even five or six years ago, the stroke had been much more felt, by all his connexions, than it is now.

I have often admired the wisdom and mercy of God, in these things. We see the threatening hand of God laid upon one of our dearest friends or relatives; at first, we think we can never endure the loss; but the affliction continues; meanwhile, the weight which he sustained in society is gradually removed, and falls, by degrees, upon his friends about him; life becomes a burden to himself; at length, the very same principle that made it appear impossible for us to endure a separation, renders us incapable of praying or even wishing for his continuance; and thus the burden that we should scarcely have known how to bear, becomes tolerable, by being gradually let down, as it were, upon our shoulders.

Our dear friend has left many relations behind him; most of whom, I suppose may at this time, be present. My dear friends,

I have often heard him express his anxiety for several of you, both as to your temporal and spiritual welfare. Some of you may have been apt to consider him as an enviable character, on account of his wealth; but, be assured, he was much more enviable on account of his piety; you need not wish so much to live like him as a gentleman, as to live and die like him as a Christian.

But, I suppose, it will be expected that I should say something more particularly of the deceased himself. I have commonly declined saying much on this head; and I still think, that, generally speaking, it is right to do so; because the generality of characters even of good men, have nothing in them very remarkable or worthy of being held up for our imitation. But, for this very reason, I think, in some cases it would be wrong to omit it. Perhaps no human writings have had a better effect than the *lives* of eminently holy men. When, therefore, any such characters appear among us, I think it is right to collect as much information respecting them as we can, that the remembrance of them may be of general use.

So far as education and parental example could influence, our deceased friend might be said to have known the holy scriptures from a child. His family, for generations past, have walked in the ways of piety. His great grandfather, Mr, William Wallis, was the founder, and first minister of the church of which you and I are members. He founded it in 1696. His grandfather, Mr. Thomas Wallis, succeeded in the same office. It was in his time that the late Dr. Gill, and the late Mr. Brine, were both called to the ministry. He died in 1726, and his funeral sermon is said, as in the present instance, to have been preached in this place,* on account of the number of people who attended it. His father, Mr. William Wallis, though not a minister, as his predecessors had been, was a very respectable member of the same

*From a respect to Mr. Wallis's memory, a greater number of people attended his funeral than Mr. Fuller's meeting could contain; and the use of the Independent meeting house having been respectfully offered, this discourse was delivered there. This circumstance accounts for some little variaton of phraseology, which an attentive reader may observe in what relates to the church. ED.

community. When he died, which was in 1757, his son, our deceased friend, was but twenty-two years of age. From his earliest years he was under strong convictions of the truth and importance of religion; but the most remarkable impression of this sort was made at the death of his father. It was then, as he said, that he went and prayed to God, and thought within himself, "O that I had but an interest in Christ; and felt all the world and all its enjoyments, to be mere vanity without it!"

At the time of his father's death, he had a brother, Mr. Joseph Wallis, about twelve years of age. The amiable piety of that young man is said to have appeared at an early period; but, to the great grief of his friends, especially of his brother, he was removed by the small-pox, in the nineteenth year of his age.

In the year 1763, at the age of twenty-eight, Mr. Wallis became a member of the same Christian community in which his predecessors had lived and died. About five years after, he was chosen to the office of a *deacon;* an office which he has filled with honour and satisfaction for twenty-four years. It was a great blessing to the church, especially when, for the space of five years, they were destitute of a minister, that he was invested with this office, and was then in the prime of life and usefulness. It will long be remembered, with what meekness of wisdom he presided in the church, during that uncomfortable interval; and how, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of such a situation, they were not only preserved in peace, but gradually increased, till a minister was settled among them.

God endued him with a sound understanding and a solid judgment. His knowledge was extensive, and his observation ons men and things, ripened by long experience, were just and accurate. He had a quick sense of right and wrong, of propriety and impropriety, which rendered his counsel of great esteem in cases of difficulty.

To this was added a spirit of *activity*. Though during the greater part of his life, he was out of trade; yet his head and hands were always full with the concerns of others, either those of private individuals, with which he was entrusted, or matters of public utility. He would rise by five in the morning, in summer, and be as

diligent all the day as if he had had to obtain his bread by the sweat of the brow.

But, perhaps, one of the most prominent features of his character was *sincerity*, or *integrity of heart*. This was a temper of mind that ran through all his concerns. In a cause of righteousness, he possessed a severity which rendered it almost impossible for treachery to stand before him. He was prudent, but his prudence never degenerated into low policy, or any thing that deserved the name of subtilty. If motives of mere prudence were proposed to him, he would hesitate, nor would he accede till he had thought whether the measure was *right*. If he could but satisfy himself on that head, he would be regardless of consequences, or of popular opinion. Even in his contributions, one might perceive his love of righteousness. Though an economist from principle, he had nothing of the niggard: only convince him that a cause was *right*, (and that was easily done, if it was so,) and he would engage in it with all his heart, nor think much of any expense. "I wish to do what is *right*," he would say, "and leave consequences." He was a standing example of the falsehood of that system which teaches that "flattery is essential to politeness." If to behave in such a manner as to gain the esteem of all descriptions of men, be politeness, he was polite; yet he hated flattery. He would neither flatter, nor be flattered by others. The true secret by which he obtained esteem was, an unaffected modesty, mingled with kindness and goodness.

He possessed a peculiar *decision* of character. His judgment was generally formed with slow deliberation; but having once made up his mind, it was not easily altered. He was decisive in the principles he embraced. He held nothing with a loose hand. He observed to me, a few weeks before he died, when mentioning what he conceived to have been his great defect in religion, that it was not a wavering disposition. "I have not," said he, "been tossed about with every wind of doctrine." He has sometimes ingenuously confessed, that he thought himself more in danger of erring, by a prejudiced attachment to receiving principles, than by the contrary. He was equally decisive in matters of *practice*. He scarcely ever engaged in any thing with indifference. What his

hand found him to do, he did it with his might. Having formed his judgment that such a matter was *right*, he would pursue it with indefatigable industry, patience, and perseverance; he would wade through difficulties that would have discouraged most men; nor was he ever satisfied till he had accomplished his end.

There are few men that have possessed a greater degree of genuine *humility*. It is often seen, where persons of affluence unite with a Christian community, they consider themselves as doing great honour to it, and expect great homage in return. But this every one that knew him can bear witness was not his spirit. It was not natural to him to assume the airs of a Diotrephes, or to avail himself of the influence which his circumstances and situation afforded him, to lord it over God's heritage. He was sometimes warm and sanguine; but that was not frequent, and never but when he considered himself as engaged in the cause of truth and righteousness.

To this may be added, there was a vein of *serious godliness* that ran through his life. It is true, he was often dejected in his own mind, lest he should be found wanting at last; so much so, as to give considerable pain to his friends. "There is something in religion," he would say, "with which I fear I have been all my life unacquainted." This dejection I attribute, in a great degree, to constitution. There are few characters that have discovered a greater fear of God, a greater acquiescence in the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour, or a greater concern to spend his life in doing good. That which would have hurt the pride of many a rich man, namely, to unite with the poor and illiterate as his brethren, was no mortification to him; on the contrary, he lately said, "I reckon it the greatest honour of my life, to have been employed in promoting the interest of Christ."

There is one circumstance more, which I cannot omit. About a week before he died, he requested that a few of his Christian friends might come and see him, and pray with him. Five of us went. When there, he told us, he did not wish us to pray for his life; he considered it as the will of God that he should die; and he added, "His will be done! But pray," said he, "that if there are any sins of which I have been guilty, and have

not yet repented; any sins for which God has any controversy with me, that he would give me a proper sense of them before I die. Or, if not, that I might enjoy the light of his countenance in death." We were all exceedingly affected. After praying with him about an hour, he gathered up what little strength he had, and addressed himself to us with a kind of solemn farewell. He reminded us of the difficulties we had been brought through as a church, expressed his satisfaction in leaving us in so comfortable a situation, recommended us to love one another, and solemnly commended us to the blessing of God! Surely I shall never forget this tender parting! But I have done. He would have invited others of his friends, whom he equally loved, but his strength began to fail him; and, in a few days, after a long series of afflictions, which he bore with great patience, calmness and resignation to God, he fell asleep.

SERMON V.

[Preached before the Baptist Association at St. Albans, June 1, 1796.]

HEB. v. 12—14.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

THERE is nothing in which the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan are more opposed, than that the one is characterized by light, and the other by darkness. The cause of falsehood is itself a dark cause, and requires darkness to cover it: but truth is light, and cometh to the light, that it may be made manifest. Knowledge is every where encouraged in the Bible; our best interests are interwoven with it; and the spirituality of our minds, and the real enjoyment of our lives depend upon its increase. *Grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* Nor is it necessary for our own sakes only, but for the sake of others. It is a great encouragement to

Christian ministers, when those whom they teach possess a good understanding in the things of God. Indeed, none but those who are engaged in the work of teaching, can tell how much the ardor of the mind is damped by the contrary: The truth of this remark is exemplified in the writer of this Epistle. In the verses immediately preceding the text, you perceive him highly interested in his subject, and proceeding in a glorious career of reasoning; when, all on a sudden, he is stopped. He had many things to say of his Lord and master; but which were *hard to be understood, seeing those to whom he wrote were dull of hearing.* It is on this occasion that he introduces the passage now before us; in which his object is to shame and provoke them, by comparing them with those who as to years were men, but as to knowledge children; and who, instead of having made advances in science, needed to be taught the alphabet over again. There are some things supposed and included in the passage, which require a little previous attention.

First: It is here supposed, that *all divine knowledge is to be derived from the oracles of God.* It is a proper term by which the sacred scriptures are here denominated, strongly expressive of their divine inspiration and infallibility: in them God speaks; and to them it becomes us to hearken. We may learn other things, from other quarters; and things, too, that may subserve the knowledge of God; but the knowledge of God itself must here be sought, for here only it can be found.

Much has been said on faith and reason, and the question has often been agitated, whether the one in any instance can be contrary to the other? In the solution of this question, it is necessary in the first place, to determine what is meant by reason. There is a great difference between *reason* and *reasoning.* Nothing which God reveals can contradict the former; but this is more than can be said of the latter. It is impossible for God to reveal any thing repugnant to what is fit and right; but that which is fit and right in one man's estimation, is preposterous and absurd in the esteem of another; which clearly proves, that reason as it exists in depraved creatures is not a proper standard of truth; and hence arrises the necessity of another and a better standard, *the*

oracles of God. By studying these, a good man will gain more understanding than his teachers, if they live in the neglect of them.

Secondly: It is supposed, that *the oracles of God include a system of divine truth.* They contain the *first principles*, or rudiments, of religion; the simple truths of the gospel, which require little or no investigation in order to their being understood: these are called *milk.* They also contain the *deep things of God*, things beyond the reach of a slight and cursory observation: and which require, if we would properly enter into them, close and repeated attention: this is *strong meat.* Those doctrines which the Apostle enumerates in the following chapter, as things which he should *leave, and go on unto perfection*, have been thought to refer to the leading principles of Judaism: and it may be so; for Judaism itself contained the first principles of Christianity; it was introductory to it; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, it was *our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.*

Thirdly: It is intimated that *Christians should not rest satisfied in having attained to a knowledge of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but should go on unto perfection:* not only so as to obtain satisfaction for themselves, but that they may be able to *teach others.* It is true, *all are not to be teachers, by office;* but, in one form or other, all should aspire to communicate the knowledge of Christ. Every Christian is required to be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear: and, if all the members of our churches did but possess this readiness, besides the advantages that would accrue to themselves and others, there would be less scarcity than there is, of able and evangelical ministers.

The leading sentiment which runs through the passage, and comprises the whole, is, THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH. To this subject, brethren, permit me to call your attention. In discoursing upon it, I shall first inquire wherein it consists, and then endeavour to show the importance of it.

1. Let us inquire WHAT A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH INCLUDES. That the oracles of God contain deep things, requires but little proof. The character of God; our

own depravity ; and that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, &c. are deep and interesting subjects. The prophets had to *search* into the meaning of their own prophecies. The riches of Christ, with which the apostles were intrusted, were denominated *unsearchable ;* and even the highest orders of created intelligences are described as *looking into these things* for their farther improvement.

It may seem presuming for any person, in the present imperfect state, to determine on subjects of such magnitude ; or to talk of a deep and intimate knowledge of things which surpass the comprehension of the most exalted creatures. And, if these terms were used either *absolutely*, to express the real conformity of our ideas of divine things to the full extent of the things themselves ; or even *comparatively*, if the comparison respected saints on earth and saints in heaven, it would be presumption. But it is only in reference to one another in the present state, that these terms are intended to apply. Compared with heavenly inhabitants, all of us are babes : even an inspired Apostle was no more. *When I was a child*, said he *I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.* There are such degrees, however, among good men in this life, as that, compared with each other, some may be said to possess only a superficial knowledge of divine truth, and others, a more deep and intimate acquaintance with it.

It is the importance of the latter of these that I wish to have impressed upon your minds. To attain it, the following, among other things, require our attention.

1. *Though we must not stop at first principles, yet we must be well grounded in them.* No person can drink deeply into any science, without being well acquainted with its rudiments ; these are the foundation on which the whole structure rests. The first principles of the oracles of God, as specified by our Apostle, are *repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, and the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.* Whatever may be meant by some of these

terms, whether they refer to things peculiar to Judaism, or to the early times of Christianity ; it is clear, from scripture and the nature of things, that others of them are expressive of principles, which, in every age, are of the first importance. Though the Apostle speaks of *leaving* them, yet he does not mean that we should give them up, or treat them with indifference, but *go on unto perfection ;* as a builder leaves his foundation when he raises his walls, and advances toward the completion of his building.

Repentance was the first lesson inculcated by John the Baptist, and Christ and the apostles ; and that, not merely on profligate sinners, but on Scribes and Pharisees. All that they had hitherto learned, required as it were, to be unlearned; and all that they had done, to be undone, and utterly relinquished.

The knowledge which carnal men acquire of divine things puffs them up ; and, while they think they understand great things, they know nothing as they ought to know it. All the works, too, which have been wrought during a state of unregeneracy are *dead works;* and, instead of being, in any degree, pleasing to God, require to be lamented, with shame and self-abhorrence. Repentance is a kind of self-emptying work ; it includes a renunciation, not only of those things for which our own consciences at the time condemned us, but of what we have been in the habit of reckoning wisdom and righteousness. Hence the propriety of the order in which the scriptures place it, with regard to faith—*Repent and believe the gospel.* Renounce your own ways, and embrace his. *He that will be wise, must first become a fool, that he may be wise.*

Faith toward God, or believing views of the being and glory of the divine character, are reckoned almost among the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. If we have just ideas of this very important subject, we have the key to the whole system of gospel truth. He who beholds the glory of the divine holiness, will, in that glass, perceive his own polluted and perishing condition ; and, when properly impressed with a sense of these things, he will naturally embrace the doctrine of a Saviour, yea, and of *a great one.* Salvation by mere grace, through the atonement of Jesus, will appear the very object of his soul's desire. And, with these principles in his heart, other scripture doctrines will appear true.

interesting and harmonious. There are but few erroneous sentiments in the Christian world, which may not be traced to a spirit of self-admiration, (which is the opposite of repentance,) or to false conceptions of the divine character.

To these the Apostle adds, *the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;* or the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, of endless duration. These are principles, which, though they occupy almost an ultimate place in the sacred system, yet, as every other important truth respecting man proceeds upon the supposition of their reality, they may properly enough be reckoned among the first principles of the oracles of God. If these principles were given up to the Infidel, the spirit of whose creed amounts to this, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:* or if the latter of them were given up to the Universalist, who, though he admits of a judgment to come, yet not of an *eternal* one; we should soon find the whole fabric of truth falling to the ground.

2. *We must not content ourselves with knowing what is truth, but must be acquainted with the evidence on which it rests.* Christians are required to be always ready to give *a reason* for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear: and this supposes, not only that every part of religion admits of a rational defence, but that it is necessary for Christians to study, that they may be able to defend it; or, at least, to feel the ground on which they rest their hope.

The truths contained in the oracles of God, may be distinguished into two kinds: those which approve themselves to our ideas of wisdom or fitness; and those which utterly surpass our understanding, but which require to be believed as matters of pure revelation. The former chiefly respect the counsels and works of God, which are exhibited to our understanding, that God in them may be made manifest: the latter more commonly respect the being and inconceivable glories of the Godhead, the reality of which we are concerned to know, but on their mode or manner are forbidden to gaze.

It is exceedingly desirable to trace the wisdom and harmony of evangelical truth: it is a source of enjoyment, superior perhaps, to any thing with which we are acquainted. All the *works of God*

are honourable and glorious, and sought out by all them that have pleasure therein; but redemption is his *great* work, wherein appears *glory to himself in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to men:* here, therefore, must needs be the highest enjoyment. Prior to the revelation of redemption, the holy angels shouted for joy over the works of *nature;* but, having witnessed the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, they *desired to look into other things.* Nothing tends more to establish the mind, and to interest the heart, in any truth, than a perception that it is adapted, at once, to express the glory of the divine character, and to meet the necessities of guilty creatures. The more we think of truth, therefore, in this way, the more we shall be *rooted and grounded* in it.

But what *reason* have we to give, for embracing those doctrines which we consider as above reason, of the fitness of which we, consequently, pretend to have no ideas. We answer, they are contained in the oracles of God. Nothing is more reasonable than to give implicit credit to Him who cannot lie. On this ground, we believe that *there are three who bear record in heaven, the Father the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one.* If God had revealed nothing but what would have come within the limits of our understanding, he must have told us little, or nothing at all, of his self-existence, eternity, and infinity; for we have no positive ideas of any of these things. Yet the revelation of such truths may be as necessary as those which approach nearer to our comprehension. The latter afford food for *knowledge;* the former teach us *humility,* and furnish matter for *faith.*

3. *We must learn truth immediately from the oracles of God.* Many religious people appear to be contented with seeing truth in the light in which some great and good man has placed it: but, if ever we enter into the gospel to purpose, it must be by reading the word of God for ourselves, and by praying and meditating upon its sacred contents. It is *in God's light, that we must see light.* By conversing with the sacred writers, we shall gradually imbibe their sentiments, and be insensibly assimilated into the same spirit.

The writings of great and good men are not to be despised, any more than their preaching; only let them not be treated as oracular. The best of men, in this imperfect state, view things *partially;* and, therefore, are in danger of laying an improper stress upon some parts of scripture, to the neglect of other parts, of equal, and, sometimes, of superior importance. Now where this is the case, imitation becomes dangerous. It is rarely known but that an original suffers in the hands of a copyest: if, therefore, the former be imperfect, what may be expected of the latter? We all come far short of truth and righteousness, let our model be ever so perfect; but, if this be imperfect, we shall possess not only our own faults, but those of another.

If, as ministers, we go about to depict either the character of a bad man, or of a good man, a state of unregeneracy, or a work of grace; and, instead of drawing from real life, only copy from some accounts which we have read or heard of these matters, we shall neither convince the sinner, nor meet the case of the believer; all, to say the least, will be foreign and uninteresting.

If we adopt the principles of fallible men, without searching the scriptures for ourselves, and inquiring whether, or not, these things be so, they will not, even allowing them to be on the side of truth, avail us as if we had learned them from a higher authority. Our faith, in this case, will stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. There is a savour in truth, when drawn from the words which the Holy Spirit teaches, which is lost, or at least diminished, if it pass under the conceptions and expressions of men. Nor will it avail us when most needed; for he who receives his creed from men, may deliver it up to men again. Truth learned only at second-hand, will be to us what Saul's armour was to David; we shall be at a loss how to use it in the day of trial.

4. If we would possess a deep and intimate acquaintance with divine truth, *we must view it in its various connexions, in the great system of redemption.* Systematical divinity, or the studying of truth in a systematical form, has been, of late years, much decried. It has become almost general to consider it as the mark of a contracted mind, and the grand obstruction to free inquiry. If we imbibe a *false* system, indeed, there is no doubt but it will prove

injurious; if it be true in part, but very *defective*, it may impede our progress in divine knowledge; or if, in order to retain a system, we torture the scriptures to make them accord with it, we shall pervert the truth, instead of preserving it. These are things which make against false, defective, and anti-scriptural systems of faith: but not in the least against *system itself*. The best criterion of a good system is its agreement with the holy scriptures. That view of things, whether we have any of us fully attained it, or not, which admits the most natural meaning to be put upon every part of God's word, is the right system of religious truth. And he whose belief consists of a number of positions arranged in such a connexion as to constitute a consistent whole, but who, from a sense of his imperfection, and a remembrance of past errors, holds himself ready to add or retrench, as evidence shall require, is in a far more advantageous track for the attainment of truth, and a real enlargement of mind, than he who thinks without a system.

To be without system is nearly the same thing as to be without principle. Whatever principles we may have, while they continue in this disorganized state, they will answer but little purpose in the religious life. Like a tumultuous assembly in the day of battle, they may exist; but it will be without order, energy, or end.

No man could decry systematical knowledge in any thing but religion, without subjecting himself to the ridicule of thinking men. A *philosopher*, for instance, would expose himself to contempt, who, instead of improving facts which had fallen under his observation, that he might discover the general laws by which they are governed; and, instead of tracing things to their first principles, and pursuing them to their just consequences, should inveigh against all general laws, all system, all connexion and dependence, and all uniform design, in the variety of creation. What should we say of a *husbandman*, who refused to arrange his observations under the respective branches of business to which they naturally belonged; who had no general scheme, or plan of proceeding; but left the work of every day to the day itself, without forethought, contrivance or design? Or what opinion should we form of a *merchant*, or a *tradesman*, who should exclude systemati-

cal knowledge from his affairs? He is constantly employed in buying and selling; but he must have no general system whereby to conduct either the one or the other; none for the regulation of his books; none for the assortment of his articles: all must be free, lest he sink into formality, and, by being in a habit of doing things in order, should contract a narrowness of mind!

'But is the Bible written upon systematical principles; does it contain a system, or does it encourage us to form one?' By the Bible being written on systematical principles, I suppose is meant a systematical arrangement of its contents: and there is no doubt but the contrary of this is true. But, then, the same might be said of the *book of nature*. Though the different species of animals, vegetables, minerals, &c. are capable of being arranged under their respective *genera*, and so reduced to a system; yet, in their actual position in creation, they assume no such appearance. It is wisely contrived, both in nature and scripture, that the objects of each should be scattered in lovely variety: but, amidst all this variety; an observant eye will perceive unity, order, arrangement, and fulness of design.

God, in all his works, has proceeded on system; there is a beautiful connexion and harmony in every thing which he has wrought. We sometimes speak of a system of nature, a system of providence, and a system of redemption; and, as smaller systems are often included in greater, the language is not improper: in reality, however, they are all but one system; one grand piece of machinery, each part of which has a dependence on the other, and all together form one glorious whole. Now, if God proceed on system, it may be expected that the scriptures, being a transcript of his mind, should contain a system; and, if we would study them to purpose, it must be so as to discover what that system is.

I never recollect to have heard any objection to systematical divinity with regard to *practice*. Let a Christian, utterly unacquainted with human writings, take his Bible, with a view to learn the mind of God upon any given subject, suppose it be the duty of parents: he will naturally collect all the passages in the sacred writings which relate to that subject, arrange them in order, and, from the whole thus taken together, regulate his conduct. For

this, no one will think of blaming him: yet this would be acting systematically.

Let him do the same with respect to every other duty, and he will be in possession of a body, or system, of practical divinity. And why should he stop here; why not collect the mind of God, from the whole of scripture taken together, upon things to be *believed*, as well as things to be performed?

If the apostles had not considered divine truth in a systematical form, how came the writer of this Epistle to speak of the *first principles* of the oracles of God? This language supposes, as before observed, a scheme, or system of faith. And, if such a form of considering truth were disadvantageous to Christians, how came he to censure the Hebrews for their want of progress in it? In his Epistle to the Romans, also, we read of the *proportion*, or *analogy*, of faith; which certainly supposes that the gospel is one proportionate or consistent whole.

Could a system of divinity be written, in which every sacred truth or duty should have a place assigned it, and such a place, both as to order and importance, as properly belonged to it, not invading the province of other truths or duties, but, on the contrary, subserving them, and itself appearing to the greatest advantage among them; such a performance would answer to what the Apostle means by *the proportion of faith*. 'But can we expect a work answering to this description from an uninspired pen?' Perhaps not. The materials for such a model exist, however, in the holy scriptures; and, though we cannot collect and arrange them to perfection, let us, as in all other things, *press towards the mark*.

Let that system of religion which we embrace be but, in the main, the right one, and, so far from contracting the mind, it is easy to perceive that it will abundantly enlarge it.

For example: let the fact of Joseph's being sold in Egypt be viewed without its connexion with God's designs, and it will appear a melancholy instance of human depravity: we shall see nothing very remarkable in it; and it will seem calculated only to afford a disgusting picture of family jealousies and intrigues, enough to break the heart of an aged parent. But let the same fact be viewed systematically, as a link in a chain, or as a part of a whole,

and it will assume a very different appearance. Thus viewed, it is an event pregnant with glory. He must needs go down into Egypt, that much people might be preserved alive; that Jacob's family might follow him; that they might there be reserved for a season, till, in due time, having become a great nation, they should be led forth with a high hand; that they might be placed in Canaan, and might set up the worship of the true God; that the Messiah might be born among them; and that his kingdom might be extended over the whole earth. Without a system, the Patriarch reflected, *All these things are against me:* but with a system, or rather with only the discovery of a very small part of it, he exclaimed, *It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go down, and see him before I die.*

In addition to this event in providence, let us offer a few examples in matters of *doctrine.*

Would you contemplate the great *evil of sin*, you must view it in its connexions, tendencies, and consequences. For a poor finite creature, whose life is but a vapour, to gratify a vicious inclination, may appear a trifle: but, when its tendencies and mischievous consequences are taken into the account, it wears a different aspect. Jeroboam *said in his heart, if this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, then shall the kingdom return unto David.* Hence he set up idolatry; and hence the nation was corrupted more and more, till, at length, it was given up to utter destruction. Considering ourselves as links in the great chain of moral government, every transgression is of vast importance, because it affects the whole system. If the government of God be once violated, an example is set, which if followed, would ruin the universe.

Farther: If we contemplate *the death of Christ* without any relation to system, we shall only see a suffering person at Jerusalem, and feel that pity and disgust which is ordinarily excited by injustice and cruelty. But let us view it as connected with the moral government of God; as a glorious expedient to secure its honours; *a propitiation* wherein *God declared his righteousness for the remission of sins*, and we shall have a new set of feelings. While the apostles continued to view this event unconnectedly.

their minds were contracted, and sorrow filled their hearts ; but when their eyes were opened to see it in its connexions and consequences, their sorrow was turned into joy. Those very persons who, but a few weeks before, could not bear to think of their Lord's departure ; after they had witnessed his ascension to glory, *returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and continued daily in the temple, praising and blessing God.*

Once more : If we view the doctrine of *election* as unconnected with other things, it may appear to us to be a kind of fondness, without reason or wisdom. A charge of caprice would, hereby, be brought against the Almighty ; and professors, like the carnal Jews, on account of the distinguishing favours conferred on their nation, would be fostered in self-conceit. But, if it be considered in connexion with the great system of religious truth, it will appear in a very different light. It will represent the Divine Being in his true character ; not as acting without design, and subjecting himself to endless disappointments ; but as accomplishing all his works in pursuance of an eternal purpose. And, as salvation, from first to last, is of mere grace, and every son and daughter of Adam is absolutely at the divine discretion, it tends powerfully to impress this idea both upon saints and sinners. While it leads the former to acknowledge, that by the grace of God they are what they are, it teaches the latter to relinquish their vain hopes, and to fall into the arms of sovereign mercy.

As the righteousness of God's elect is not the ground of their election, so neither is their felicity its ultimate end. God righteously hides the things of the gospel from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes, because *so it seemeth good in his sight:* it tends most to display the glory of his character, and to promote the general good of creation. These things, if properly considered, are of a humbling tendency.

If the Jews had considered that they were not chosen, or put in possession of the good land, *for the righteousness, or for the uprightness of their hearts:* and that, though it was an instance of great love to them, yet it was not ultimately for their sake, or to accomplish their happiness, but that God *might fulfil his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in whom and in whose seed *all*

the nations of the earth were to be blessed; and, if they had considered the salvation of the world as the end of their national existence, and themselves as *God's witnesses* till the times of reformation; instead of valuing themselves, and despising others, they would have reckoned themselves *their servants for Jehovah's sake.*

In short, by considering principles in their various connexions, *far greater advances will be made in divine knowledge than by any other means.* The discovery of one important truth will lead on to a hundred more. Let a Christian but realize, for example, the glory of the Divine Character as the moral governor of the world; and he will at once perceive the equity and goodness of the moral law, which requires us to love him with all the heart. In this glass, he will see his own depravity; and, possessed of these views, the grace of the gospel will appear to him to be grace indeed. Every blessing it contains will be endearing, and the medium through which all is conveyed, superlatively precious. A train of thought like this has frequently proved more interesting than the labours of those, who, having discovered a vein of silver or gold, dig deeply into the bowels of the enriching mine.

Having considered a few of the means necessary for the attainment of a deep and intimate knowledge of truth, I shall,

II. Attempt to establish THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A KNOWLEDGE.

As the powers of created beings are limited, and no one can expect to understand every thing, it is the province of wisdom to select those kinds of knowledge, as the objects of our pursuit, which are most valuable, and of the greatest utility. There are some depths, of which it is our honour and felicity to be ignorant; and, even in things which are lawful, we may, in numberless instances, very well be excused, if not in wholly neglecting, yet in possessing only a general acquaintance with them. But divine truth requires not only to be known, but *well* known: it is not only necessary that we have sentiments, and right sentiments but that we enter *deeply* into them. Every thing pertaining to God is great, and requires all our powers. In whatever we indulge indifference, there is no room for it here; God requires not only all our *heart*, but all our *mind and strength.*

The importance of a deep and intimate acquaintance with divine truth, will more particularly appear, from the following considerations:

1. A *neglect* of God's word is represented as *a heinous sin*. But we shall not be able to escape this sin, if we content ourselves with a superficial acquaintance with truth. Revelation, in every stage, demands our serious attention; but the revelation of eternal life through Jesus Christ requires attention in the highest degree. This is that *great salvation* which we are charged not to neglect. The dignity of its author, its sublime and interesting nature, with the accumulated evidence which God has condescended to afford us of its divine original, combine to require of us the most careful and cordial examination into its contents. A neglect of this is either total or partial: the former would denominate us unbelievers, and expose us to utter destruction; the latter, though it may exist in sincere Christians, is, nevertheless, a sin, and a sin more than a little offensive to the God of all truth.

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with divine things, implies *disrespect to Him who has revealed them*. A letter from a distant friend, to whom we are cordially attached, is viewed and reviewed, and every sentence of it carefully inspected, and, on many occasions, committed to memory. Why should not the word of God be productive of the same effects? Indeed it is: for in proportion as we love God, his word will *dwell richly in us*. It will be our bosom companion, to which we shall have recourse on every occasion; especially in seasons of leisure, when the mind, like a spring from which a pressure is removed, rises to its natural position. Hence the following language: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with divine things, implies also *a want of affection to the things themselves.*

A will, or testament, in which we were deeply interested, would be procured with eagerness, and read with avidity ; and, if any difficulty remained as to the meaning of a particulnr passage, we should have no rest till, by some means or other, we had obtained a solution of it. I need not apply this remark. Nothing is more evident, than that whatever is uppermost in our affections, will form the grand current of our thoughts. And, where our thoughts are directed to a subject with intenseness and perseverance, it will become familiar to us ; and, unless it be owing to the want of natural capacity, or any other necessary means, we shall, of course, enter deeply into it.

I have been much struck with the ardent affection which David discovered to the holy scriptures, and every part of their sacred contents. The whole 119 Psalm is a continued encomium upon them. There we have such language as the following : *O how I love thy law ! My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.* Now, all the scriptures which were then extant amounted to little more than the writings of Moses. What additions have we since enjoyed ! Besides the Book of Psalms, and the Prophecies which followed, we have the whole New Testament, *full of grace and truth,* wherein the invisible God has, as it were, rendered himself visible. *Him whom no man had seen at any time, the only begotten Son, who dwelt in his bosom, hath declared.* How is it that such a price should be in our hands to get wisdom, and yet that we should have so little heart for it ?

2. The word of God is represented as *a mean of sanctification.* But no effect of this kind can be produced beyond the degree in which we imbide it. One great object of our Lord's intercession with the Father, on our behalf, was, *that we might be sanctified through the truth,* even *by his word, which is truth.* The gospel is continually held up, not only as *a doctrine according to godliness,* but as having a powerful influence in producing it. *It teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we shall live soberly,*

righteously, and godly, in this present world. It worketh effectually in those who believe. It was by the doctrine of the cross, that the world became crucified to the Apostle, and he unto the world. So universal and so manifest were the effects of divine truth upon the practice of the primitive Christians, that the sacred writers could appeal to fact, on their behalf, that they, and they only, were successful combatants against the world's temptations: *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Now, in order that the gospel may be productive of these effects, it is necessary that it be understood. Without this, how should it interest or affect the heart? We must *believe* the truth ere it will work effectually: we must *know* it, or it will not make us free. That we may serve God acceptably, and with godly fear, we must have *grace;* and grace is multiplied *through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*

Knowledge and affection have a mutual influence on each other. That the love of truth will prompt us to labour after a more perfect acquaintance with its contents, has been already observed: and that such an acquaintance will promote an increasing love of truth, in return, is equally evident. We cannot love an unknown gospel, any more than an unknown God. Affection is fed by knowledge, being thereby furnished with grounds, or reasons, for its operations. By the expansion of the mind the heart is supplied with objects which fill it with delight. It is thus that it becomes enlarged, and that we feel ourselves sweetly induced to *run in the way of the divine commandments.*

How was it that the apostle became dead to the world, by the cross of Christ? I suppose, on much the same principle, that the light of the stars is eclipsed by that of the sun; or, that a man, having drunk old wine, ceases to desire new, for he saith the old is better. It is by drinking deeply into religion, that we become disaffected to carnal objects.

3. The word of God is represented as *the great source of Christian enjoyment.* But no effect of this kind can be produced, any farther than we imbibe the truth. The same way which divine

truth operates, as a medium of sanctification, it becomes a source of enjoyment; namely, by interesting and affecting the heart. That which, by its superior lustre, eclipses the pleasures of sense, and crucifies us to the world, at the same time kindles a joy in the heart which is unspeakable and full of glory. The habitual joy which was possessed by the apostles and primitive Christians chiefly arose from a knowledge and belief of the gospel. It was *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*, that induced the Apostle to *count all things but loss.* Those in whom *the word of Christ dwelt richly, in all wisdom*, were supposed to be so enlivened by it, that it became natural to them to *teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord.* The object for which the Apostle *bowed his knees to the Father of glory*, in behalf of the Ephesians, was, that, by means of a *comprehensive knowledge of the breadth and length and depth and height of* the redeeming *love of Christ, they might be filled with all the fulness of God.* The wells of salvation are deep; and he that lacketh knowledge is as one that has nothing to draw with.

The prejudice of many Christians against doctrinal preaching, as being; in their esteem, *dry and uninteresting;* and the preference given to that which is more descriptive of their feelings, and, therefore, termed *experimental,* is worthy of attention. If the doctrine which we preach be not the unadulterated gospel of Christ, it will, indeed, be dry; or if, instead of entering into the spirit of truth, we are employed in a fruitless discussion of terms, or things on which the scriptures forbear to decide, it must needs be uninteresting, and even disgusting, to a holy mind. But if the pure gospel of Jesus, well understood by the preacher, and communicated from the fullness of his heart, do not interest us, there must be some lamentable disorder in the state of our minds. If the manna that comes down from heaven be loathed, it is a sign that things are not with us as they ought to be. The doctrine of Moses, and surely much more that of Jesus, *dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, upon the tender herb.*

Christian *experience,* (or what is generally understood by that

term, the painful and pleasurable feelings of good men,) will be found, if genuine, to arise from the influence of truth upon the mind. If we be strangers to the glory of God's moral character, and the great evil of sin, we shall be strangers to all the feelings of godly sorrow on account of it. And what ground is there for *joy and peace*, but *in believing?* Take away the deity and atonement of Christ, and they are annihilated. To this may be added, Give up the doctrines of the resurrection and a future life, and what becomes of hope? From these instances, out of many others, you will easily perceive, that doctrinal and experimental preaching are not so remote from each other as some persons have imagined; and that to extol the latter, at the expense of the former, is to act like him who wishes the fountain to be destroyed, because he prefers the stream.

4. *It is a great object in the Christian life, according to our capacities and opportunities, to diffuse the light of the gospel around us.* But we cannot communicate any thing beyond the degree in which we possess it. The communication of gospel truth is not confined to ministers. Every Christian moves in a sphere of some extent; and is expected so to occupy it, as to embrace every occasion which may offer, to make known the way of eternal life to those about him. The primitive churches were schools of heavenly instruction, as the words of the text, to go no farther, plainly intimate; and the Apostle reproves some of their members for having made no greater proficiency. Though it would be in vain for every one to aspire as being a public teacher of Christianity, yet, as has been already observed, every one should be concerned that he may be able to *give a reason for the hope that is in him*, and to teach the good and the right way to those with whom he is immediately connected. The duties of a parent and a master, include in them the instruction of those who are committed to their care. Many opportunities arise, in which Christians might communicate the knowledge of Christ to their neighbours; those in a state of servitude, to their fellow-servants; and, provided it were done on proper occasions, and, according to the apostolic rule, *in meekness*

and fear, persons in inferior stations might suggest a useful hint even to their superiors.

When the family of Elimelech went to sojourn in Moab, they carried their religion with them; so recommending the God of Israel to those with whom they formed connexions, that one of them was induced to leave her country, her kindred, and her gods, and to put her trust under the shadow of his wings. And even a *little maid* of the land of Israel, who had been carried captive into Syria, by speaking to her mistress; on a favourable opportunity, was instrumental in her master's being healed of his leprosy, and in his being brought to acknowledge and adore the true God. Such cases are recorded to encourage us to communicate the good knowledge of God on all proper occasions: but, in order to do this, we must first possess it, and that in a greater degree than is sufficient barely to denominate us Christians.

Perhaps, one of the most favourable opportunities for Christians to suggest important truth to their neighbours and connexions is, when any of them are under a threatening affliction. To visit them at such a time would be kindly taken: even the worst of characters are commonly accessible when they apprehend eternity to be drawing nigh. You may then freely converse and pray with them; and, if your circumstances will admit, and theirs require it, a communication of your worldly substance would convince them of your good-will, give weight to your instructions, and correspond with the conduct of him who went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men. But such a practice requires an intimate acquaintance with divine truth. It is an important matter to converse with men who are just on the borders of an eternal world: it requires not only tenderness, faithfulness, and prudence; but an *ability* to expose those false refuges, and detect those delusive hopes, to which, at such seasons, they are generally disposed to fly; and to direct them to the *only name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved.*

5. *In times of apostasy from the truth, Christians are exhorted to be steadfast.* But a steadfast adherence to truth requires that we be rooted and grounded in it. The wisdom of God sees meet, in

order to prove mankind, and especially his professing people, to suffer other gospels besides the true one, to obtain footing among us. I am aware, that it is become customary, in these times to make a jest of heresy, and to deride, as illiberal, narrow-minded bigots, all those who consider any religious sentiments as endangering the salvation of men. But I hope we shall not, on this account, be deterred from such an attachment to truth as the scriptures encourage. It is granted that the term heresy has been wretchedly abused; and that it becomes Christians to beware of applying it to every departure from even truth itself: yet there is such a thing in being. There were heresies in the apostles' times; and it was predicted that there should, in after times, be persons who would bring in even *damnable heresies*. Let no one be startled at the use of these terms: I did not coin them, and am not accountable for them; but, seeing they occupy a place in the holy scriptures, I think myself concerned to understand them. Whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining their precise object, they, undoubtedly, teach us that men's souls may be destroyed by mental, as well as by sensual lusts, even the souls of professing Christians; for the words are not intended to describe open Infidels, but such as should bear the Christian name, yea, and who should be teachers of Christianity.

The circulation of doctrines pleasing to corrupt nature will prove men to be what they are. They are the fan in Christ's hand, by which he will thoroughly purge his floor. That light-minded professors of religion should be carried away with them, is no more a matter of surprise than that chaff should be carried away by the wind: but how is it that those of whom we would hope better things are often shaken?

If a minister, in almost any congregation, should relinquish truth, and fall into the grossest errors; unless he had so conducted himself as to have gained little or no esteem among the people he is seldom known to go off alone: sometimes half a congregation, and sometimes more, have been known to follow him, or, at least to be greatly unhinged for a considerable time. If a writer start up, in almost any connexion, let his performance be ever so

weak or extravagant; yet, if he possess but a sufficient quantity of overbearing assurance, he will have his admirers; and some serious people too, will be in danger of being turned aside. How are these things to be accounted for? I conceive the principal reason is, that Christians content themselves with a superficial knowledge of divine things. Great numbers from a dislike to controversy, will never take any pains to understand the difference between one set of religious principles and another. They have no desire to enable themselves to distinguish between true and false reasonings. They are too apt to take it for granted, that what they have imbibed is truth, and that nothing can be advanced, with the least colour of reason, for the contrary: when, therefore, an argument appears with a little plausibility on its face, it has only to obtain a reading, or a hearing, and their assent is gained. Brethren, let shame, if nothing else, provoke us, that we *henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.* Let us be concerned, not obstinately to adhere to our present sentiments, be what they may; but to know the mind of God in his word; and, knowing it, let us steadfastly adhere to it.

The present age seems to be an age of trial. Not only is the gospel corrupted by those who bear the Christian name; but, of late, you well know, it has been openly assailed. The most direct and daring opposition has been made to the very name of Christianity. I am not going to alarm you with any idea that *the church is in danger*: no, my brethren: the church of which we, I trust, are members, and of which Christ, and Christ alone, is the head, is not in danger; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Neither are my apprehensions excited concerning those who are true members of the church: these trying blasts, though they may affect them for a season, will ultimately cause them to take deeper root. Nevertheless, it becomes us to feel for the souls of men, especially for the rising generation; and to warn even good men that they be not unarmed in the evil day.

The human heart has ever been averse from the gospel of Christ,

but the turn or temper of the present age is peculiarly in favour of Infidelity. In much the same manner as in former ages men were violently attached to a persecuting superstition, they are now verging to the opposite extreme, and are in danger of throwing off all religion. Our temptations and those which will attend our posterity after us, are likely, therefore, to be widely different from what they have hitherto been. Hitherto, nominal Christianity has been no reproach; but reproach has attached itself to the other side. The case, in this respect, may soon be altered. Men grow bold in avowing their contempt of Christianity; and many among the dissipated part of the youth are following their example. Now, if characters of this description should spring up in sufficient numbers, not only to keep each other in countenance, but to turn the tide of reproach against Christians, as a company of wrong-headed enthusiasts, we shall soon see which side the mass of mankind will take. Their characters being loose and profligate, they have long felt themselves condemned by the gospel; and this is a matter that does not sit very easy upon them. Nothing has kept them from rejecting it before, but the disgrace that would follow upon their becoming open Infidels: whenever, therefore, this disgrace shall be removed, we may expect them to go off in great companies. The slightest observation of human nature must convince us, that the greater part of mankind, even in religious matters, are governed by fashion: they go with *the course of this world.* So great an influence has the tide of public opinion upon them, that even where it is not altogether agreeable to their own views and inclinations, they are, nevertheless, frequently carried away by it: but if it be thus where public opinion and private inclination are at variance, it must of course, be much more so in those cases wherein they are agreed. This will be like a union of the wind and tide; and the vessel which is carried along by such a joint influence, can scarcely have any thing left to impede its progress.

The great influence which a certain popular pamphlet has had upon men's minds, is not so much owing to the work itself, though it possesses all the agreeableness to a depraved heart

which wit and malignity can give it,) as to the bias of the present generation in favour of the principles which it contains. Of this the author himself seems to have been sufficiently aware, by the title which he has thought proper to give his performance—*The Age of Reason.*

It is not unlikely, that almost all our religious controversies will soon be reduced to one, upon which the great body of men will divide. Is Christianity true or false? Is there a God? Is there a heaven and a hell? or is it all a fiction? Agitated by these important questions, the greater part of the inhabitants of Europe, and, perhaps, of America, including our own posterity, may rank either as real Christians, or as open Infidels.

What shall we say to these things? Ought they to depress us? We ought, undoubtedly, to feel for the welfare of men's souls, and cannot but feel for those who are more intimately connected with us: but, upon any other principle, I know not that they ought to have any such effect upon us. God is upon his throne: his church is upon a rock: whatever *hour of temptation may be coming upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth, those who hold fast the word of his patience will be kept through it.—All things work together for good to them that love God.* With these views Christians may rejoice, and rejoice always.

While we rejoice, however, we must rejoice with trembling; and, while we confide in God, must be diffident of ourselves. Let us not presume on our own firmness, but *put on the whole armour of God, that we may withstand in the evil day.* The first thing required in this divine accoutrement is, that *our loins be girt about with truth*: but truth will not prove as a girdle to our loins in the day of battle, except we be deeply and intimately acquainted with it.

O ye sons and daughters of carelessness, who are called Christians, but have no root in yourselves, what aspect do these things wear towards you? The time seems drawing nigh that will prove you to be what you are! Hitherto there has been an *outer-court* for you, and you have worshipped in it. You have long had a form of godliness, but have been without the power. You have ranked with the friends of truth, but have never received it

in love, that you might be saved. You have kept up the profession of something that has been called Christianity, without feeling yourselves under any necessity to proceed farther: but now your outer-court will, probably, be taken away, and you will feel yourselves impelled, as it were, either to *come in*, and be Christians in reality, or to *go out*, and take your portion with the unbelieving and the abominable.

SERMON VI.

[Preached at the Circus, Edinburgh, Oct. 13, 1799.]

GAL. VI. 7, 8.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

COMMON subjects, my brethren, are the most important, and need to be most inculcated. We are apt to think we have heard enough of them, and can expect but little, if any farther improvement from them. But such imaginations are founded in mistake. Though, generally speaking, we assent to the important truth which is here suggested, yet there are but few of us who feel its force, or properly act under its influence.

The solemn warning here given, is not unnecessary. Perhaps, there is nothing to which depraved creatures are more addicted, though nothing be more dangerous than *self deception*. It is from this predilection in favour of something that shall prophesy good concerning them, that the truth is disrelished, and those doctrines

and systems of religion which flatter their pride and cherish their security, are so eagerly imbibed. The human heart loves to be soothed. The pleasing sounds *peace, peace* though there be no peace, will be gratefully received. But let us not be our own enemies. To impose upon ourselves is all that we can do: *God is not mocked.* When all is said and done, *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Some men venture to hope that *there is no hereafter*, no harvest to follow; or that, though they persist in sowing to the flesh, yet they shall not of the flesh reap corruption: but this is a most forlorn hope. Uhappy men! Every thing around you proves that there is a God; and something within you, in spite of all your efforts to stifle its remonstrances, tells you, that you are accountable to him, and must give an account before him. To you the words that I have read are particularly addressed: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!*

Others, who admit a future state, yet hope to escape the just reward of their evil deeds, from an idea which they entertain of *the general mercy of God.* It is true, God is merciful; but his mercy is not connivance. He is merciful; but it is only through a mediator: while, therefore, you neglect his salvation, there is no mercy for you. You confess uot your iniquity upon the head of the substitute; therefore it will be found upon your own head. Your religion is no better than that of Cain, who brought an offering without a sacrifice: The Lord will not accept it. He is merciful; but it is to men of a broken and contrite spirit. Of others, he says, *He that made them will not have mercy upon them; and he that formed them will show them no favour.* O ye formalists! ye heathens under a Christian name! the passage that I have read looks hard at you: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Others have derived a hope from the performance of certain *superstitious rites*, or from the *bestowment of a portion of their wealth on some religious object.* Much of this kind of delusion has been practised in Popish countries. Men who have lived a life of injustice, or debauchery, or both, have hoped to balance accounts

with the Almighty by performing a journey to the tomb of some departed saint, by building a church, or by endowing an hospital. It were well if this kind of sulf-deception were confined to Popish countries: but, alas! it is natural to unrenewed minds, of all nations and religions, to substitute ceremony in the place of judgment, mercy, and the love of God; and to hope to escape the divine displeasure by the works of their own hands. Are there any of this description here? We shall have a collection, this evening, for the printing of the New Testament in the Bengalee language. If I only wished for your money, I might say, Give, whatever be your motive! No, I am not so concerned for the salvation of the Heathen, as to be regardless of that of my own countrymen! I ask not a penny from such a motive: and, moreover, I solemnly warn you, that if you give all your substance in this way, it will avail you nothing. *Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Finally: Others flatter themselves that their iniquity will not find them out, seeing *Christ has died.* And true it is, with regard to all who believe in him, and who *sow to the Spirit,* that they will not be dealt with according to their deserts, but according to the merits of him in whom they have believed. Of this we shall have occasion to speak more particularly, hereafter. At present, let it suffice to observe, that unbelievers, who continue to *sow to the flesh*, have no interest in this mercy. There might as well have been no Saviour, nay, better, so far as their future happiness is concerned, than a Saviour not believed in, loved, nor obeyed. Iniquity, unlamented, will inevitably be our ruin. It is as true as though Christ had never died, that *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

It is a very serious and impressive truth which is here held up, THAT ALL WHICH IS DONE IN THIS LIFE IS PREPARATORY TO ANOTHER: OR, THAT THE SORROWS AND JOYS OF A FUTURE WORLD BEAR A SIMILAR RELATION TO WHAT IS WROUGHT IN THIS, AS THE HARVEST BEARS TO THE SEED SOWN. This is the subject to which I wish to call your serious attention: and surely I may presume that such an attention will not be withheld.

I. Let us begin on the subject of SOWING TO THE FLESH, and observe the relation which the future punishment of the wicked will bear to it.

The fruit which arises from sowing to the flesh is termed *corruption.* It does not consist in the destruction of being, but of well-being: in the blasting of peace, joy, and hope; and consequently, in the enduring of tribulation, anguish, and everlasting despair.

This dreadful harvest will all originate in the sin which has been committed in the present life. Even here we see enough to convince us of its destructive tendency. We see intemperance followed with disease, idleness with rags, pride with scorn, and indifference to evangelical truth with the *belief of a lie.* We see nations desolated by wars, neighbourhoods and families rendered miserable by contentions, and the minds of individuals sinking under the various loads of guilt, remorse, and despair. Great is the misery of man upon him. Yet this is but the *blade* proceeding from this deadly seed; or, at most, the *ear:* the *full corn in the ear* is reserved for another state.

The scriptural representations of the wrath to come convey the idea, not of torture inflicted by mere power, nor of punishment without respect to desert; but of bitter *weepings and wailings*, in reflecting on the deeds done in the body. The punishment of the adulterer is described as a *bed*, a bed of devouring fire; the deceiver will find himself deceived; he that loved cursing, it shall come upon him, as oil into his bones; and they who continued to say unto God, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, God will say unto them, *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity: I never knew you.*

Future misery will greatly consist in *reflection.* Abraham said to the rich man, *Son, remember!* If the memory could be obliterated, there is reason to think hell would be extinguished: but it must remain.

There are four things, in particular, pertaining to sin, which will continue to be the objects of reflection, and which, therefore, must prove the seeds of future misery.

1. *The character of the Being against whom it has been committed.* If God had been wanting in justice or goodness; if his law had been what some have profanely said of it—a taskmaster, requiring brick without straw; if compliance with his will had been inconsistent with real happiness; if his invitations had been insincere; or if his promises had, in any instance, been broken; if his threatenings had borne no proportion to the evil of the offence; or if, in condemning the sinner, he had availed himself of his being stronger than he; his wrath might possibly have been endured. We can hear an unjust punishment, better than a just one. The displeasure of a malignant being, however it may injure us, does not bereave us of inward peace: it is the frown of *goodness* that is intolerable. To have incurred the displeasure of a God whose nature is LOVE, must furnish reflections which cannot be endured.

2. *The folly of it.* There are few things, in the present state, which sting the mind with keener sensations than the recollection that we have ruined ourselves by our own foolishness.

If we see a man eager in pursuing trifles while he neglects things of the greatest importance; anxious to shun imaginary evils, and heedlessly plunging himself into real ones; all attention to present indulgences, but regardless of his future interests; averse from what is his duty, and busying himself in things for which he is utterly incompetent, and which, therefore, he should commit to another; in fine, studying to displease his best friend, and to gratify his worst enemy; we should, without hesitation, pronounce him a foolish man, and foretel his ruin. Yet all this is the constant practice of every unconverted sinner; and, if he persist in his folly, the recollection of it in a future state, must overwhelm him with *shame and everlasting contempt.*

3. *The aggravating circumstances which attend it.* The same actions committed in different circumstances possess very different degrees of guilt. The Heathens, in pursuing their immoralities, are without excuse; but those who are guilty of the same things amidst the blaze of gospel light, are much more so. The profligate conduct of those young people whose parents have set them the example, is heinous: but what is it in comparison of that which is against example, and in spite of all the tears, prayers, and re-

monstrances of their godly relations? And what is the rejection of the gospel in the most ignorant part of the community, in comparison of that which is accompanied with much hearing, reading and reflection?

O my hearers! A large proportion of the sin committed among us is of this description: it is against light, and against love. Wisdom crieth in our streets, and understanding putteth forth her voice. The melting invitations, and solemn warnings of God are frequently sounded in our ears. If we should perish, therefore, ours will not be the lot of common sinners: our reflections will be similar to those of Chorazin and Bethsaida, whose inhabitants are represented as more guilty than those of Sodom and Gomorrha. To reject the gospel, whether it be by a preference of gross indulgencies, a fondness for refined speculations, or an attachment to our own righteousness, is to incur *the wrath of the Lamb;* which is held up to us as the most dreadful of all wrath; as that from which unbelievers would be glad to be hid, though it were by being crushed beneath falling rocks, or buried in oblivion at the bottom of the mountains.

4. That in sin which will furnish matter for still further reflection will be *its effects on others connected with us.* It is a very affecting consideration, that we are so linked together in society, that we almost necessarily communicate our dispositions one to another. We draw, and are drawn, in both good and evil. If we go to heaven, we are commonly instrumental in drawing some others along with us; and it is the same if we go to hell. If a sinner, when he has destroyed his own soul, could say, 'I have injured myself only,' his reflections would be very different from what they will be.

The influence of an evil word or action, in a way of example, may surpass all calculation. It may occupy the attention of the sinner only for the moment; but, being communicated to another, it may take root in him, and bring forth fruit an hundred fold. He also may communicate it to his connexions, and they to theirs; and thus it may go on to increase, from generation to generation. In this world, no competent idea can be formed of these effects; but

they will be manifest in the next, and must needs prove a source of bitter reflection.

What sensations must arise in the minds of those whose lives have been spent in practising the abominable arts of seduction; whose words, looks, and gestures, like a pestilence that walketh in darkness, convey the poison of their hearts, and spread wide wasting ruin among the unguarded youth. There they will be *cast into a bed, and those who have committed adultery with them!*

See there, too, the ungodly parent, compassed about, and loaded with execrations by his ungodly offspring, whom he has led on, by his foul example, till both are fallen into perdition.

Nor is this all: there also will be seen the *blind leader of the blind, both fallen into the ditch;* the deluded preacher, with his deluded hearers; each of whom, during life, were employed in deceiving the other. The mask is now stripped off. Now it appears to what issue all his soothing flatteries led; and what was his real character at the time, notwithstanding the decency of his outward demeanour. Now it is manifest, that he who led not the sheep of Christ into the true pasture, *entered not in by the door himself.* Ah! now the blood of souls crieth for vengeance! Me thinks I see the profligate part of his auditory, who died before him, surprised at his approach. 'That we,' say they, 'who have lived in pleasure, and in wantonness, should come to this place, is no wonder; but . . . . *Art* THOU *also become like one of us?*'

I proceed,

II. To offer some ramarks on SOWING TO THE SPIRIT; or to point out the relation that subsists between what is done for Christ in this life and the joys of the life to come.

Before I attempt to establish this part of the subject, it will be proper to form a clear and scriptural idea of it.

The relation between sowing to the Spirit and everlasting life, is as *real* as that between sowing to the flesh and everlasting death: it does not follow, however, that it is, in all respects, the same. The one is a relation of *due desert;* but the other is not so. The scriptures, while they represent death as the proper *wages* of sin, have decided that eternal life is *the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The leading principles necessary to a clear understanding of this subject, may be stated under the following particulars :

1. *Nothing performed by a creature, however pure, can properly merit everlasting life.* To merit at the hand of God would be to lay him under an obligation ; and this would be the same thing as becoming profitable to him : but we are taught, when we have done all, to acknowledge that we are *unprofitable servants, having done no more than was our duty to do.*

2. *God may freely lay himself under an obligation to reward the obedience of a holy creature with everlasting life ; and his so doing may be fit, and worthy of him.* This fitness, however, arises, not from the proportion between the service and the reward, but from such a conduct being adapted to express to creation in general the love which the Creator bears to righteousness, and to give encouragement to the performance of it. Such was the promise made to our first parents ; which, had they continued obedient, would have entitled them to the reward.

3. *Man having sinned, the promised good is forfeited ; and death becomes the only reward of which he is worthy.* All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The law is become *weak through the flesh*, like a just judge, who is incapable of acquitting a criminal, or of awarding life to a character who deserves to die.

4. *God having designs of mercy, notwithstanding, towards rebellious creatures, sent forth his Son to obey and suffer in their place ; resolving to bestow eternal life on all that believe in him, as the reward of his undertaking.* So well pleased was the Father with the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, that he not only set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, and made him head over all principalities and powers, and every name that is named ; but gave him the full desire of his heart, the salvation of his people. Hence all spiritual blessings are said to be given us *in him, through him*, or *for his sake. By means of his death* we receive the promise of *eternal inheritance ;* and our salvation is considered as *the travail of his soul*, which it was promised him he should *see, and be satisfied.* Mercy shown to a sinner in this way is, in effect, saying, ' Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you ; (be

ashamed and confounded, O apostate creatures !) but to do honour to the interposition of my Son. Him will I hear !'

5. *God not only accepts of all who believe in his Son, for his sake, but their services also become acceptable and rewardable, through the same medium.* If our works, while unbelievers, had any thing truly good in them, which they have not, still it were impossible that they should be acceptable to God "It does not consist with the honour of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth," as a great writer expresses it, "to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed."* But being *accepted in the beloved*, our works are accepted likewise. *The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.—He worketh in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.—Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Being *accepted in the beloved*, our services become impregnated, as it were, with his worthiness ; our petitions are offered up with the *much incense* of his intercession ; and both are treated, in a sort, as though they were his. God, in blessing and rewarding Abraham's posterity, is represented as blessing and rewarding him. *By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing, I will bless thee—and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies* Accordingly, though it be said of Caleb, *because he followed the Lord fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it ;* yet it was no less a fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, than of that to him. In like manner, in approving the services of believers, God approves of the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, of which they are the fruits ; and, in rewarding them, continues to reward him, or to express his well-pleasedness in his mediation.

This, brethren, I take to be, for substance, the *Christian doctrine of rewards.* I am persuaded it excludes boasting, and, at the same time, affords the greatest possible encouragement to be *constant, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

* President Edwards's *Sermons on Justification.*

On this ground, I proceed to establish the position with which I set out, *That the joys of futurity will bear a relation to what is done for Christ in the present life, similar to that between the seed and the harvest.*

The same peace and joy in God which primarily arises from the mediation of Christ, may arise, in a secondary sense, from the fruits of it in our own souls. We know by experience, as well as by scripture testimony, that it is thus in the present world: hence that *great peace* which they enjoy who love the divine law; and that *satisfaction* which a good man is said to possess *from himself*: and what good reason can be given, why that, which has been a source of peace and satisfaction here, should not be the same hereafter? If future rewards interfered with the grace of God, or the merit of Christ, present ones must do the same: for a difference in place or condition makes no difference as to the nature of things. Besides this, the scriptures expressly teach us, that the heavenly inheritance is *treasure laid up on earth*, the *crown* of the faithful, and the *reward* of those who have been hated, persecuted, and falsely accused for their Redeemer's sake. The same apostle who teaches that salvation is of *grace*, and *not of works*, and that we are *accepted in the beloved*, assures us, that he *laboured,—that he might be accepted of the Lord:* for, he adds, *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.* The addresses to the seven Asiatic churches abound with the same sentiments. Eternal life, under various forms of expression, is there promised as the reward of those who should *overcome.*

This doctrine will receive farther confirmation, if we consider *wherein the nature of heavenly felicity consist.* There can be no doubt but that an essential part of it will consist in the *divine approbation;* and this, not merely on account of what we shall then be, but of what we have been and done, in the present world. So far as we have sown to the Spirit, so far we shall reap the approbation of God; and this will be a harvest that will infinitely exceed all our toils. We are assured, that, for those who feared the Lord, and are concerned for his name in times of general declen-

sion, *a book of remembrance is written;* and, from the account given us by our Lord, it appears, that its contents will be published in the presence of an assembled world. *The King will say unto those at his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father.—I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

Another essential part of the heavenly felicity will consist in *ascribing glory to God and the Lamb.* It will be a source of joy unspeakable to perceive the abundance of glory which will redound to the best of Beings from all the works of his hands. But, if we rejoice that God is glorified, we cannot but rejoice in the recollection that we have been instrumental in glorifying him. It belongs to the nature of love to rejoice in an opportunity of expressing itself; and, when those opportunities have occurred, to rejoice in the recollection of them. We are told, that when David was anointed king in Hebron *there was joy in Israel.* Undoubtedly it must have afforded pleasure to all who had believed that God had appointed him to that office, and had felt interested for him during his affliction, to see him crowned by the unanimous consent of the tribes, whoever were the instruments of raising him to the throne: but it must give peculiar joy to those worthies, who, at an early period, had cast in their lot with him, and fought by his side through all his difficulties. And, as they would feel a special interest in his exaltation, so special honours were conferred on them under his government. It is, I apprehend, in allusion to this piece of sacred story, that our Lord speaks in the manner he does to his apostles: *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

The satisfaction of the apostle Paul, in having *fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith,* did not consist in a pharisaical self-complacency; but in a consciousness of having, in some good measure, lived to his glory who died for him, and rose again: and the same consciousness that rendered him happy, while

in the prospect of his crown, must render him still more so in the possession of it.

It has been noticed, that one great source of future misery to the sinner, will be the *effects* which his sin has produced upon others; and much the same may be observed concerning the righteous. We already perceive the tendency which a holy, upright, and benevolent conduct has to work conviction in the minds of men: but in the world to come the seed will have actually produced its fruits; and, God being thereby glorified, the hearts of those who have contributed towards it must be filled with grateful satisfaction.

We can form no competent ideas, at present, of the effects of good, any more than of evil. What we do of either, is merely the kindling of a fire; how far it may burn we cannot tell, and, generally speaking, our minds are but little occupied about it. Who can calculate the effects of a modest testimony borne to truth; of an importunate prayer for its success; of a disinterested act of self-denial; of a willing contribution; of a seasonable reproof; of a wholesome counsel; of even a sigh or pity, or a tear of sympathy? Each or any of these exercises may be the means, in the Lord's hand, of producing that in the bosoms of individuals which may be communicated to their connexions, and from them to theirs, to the end of time.

The gospel dispensation also is accompanied with peculiar encouragements for such exercises: it is that period in which the Messiah receives of *the travail of his soul;* and consequently, that in which his servants may warrantably hope for the greatest success. Under his reign, we have the promise of the Spirit being *poured upon us from on high*, and of various other blessings resulting from it: particularly, that *the wilderness shall become a fruitful field;* that it shall be so fertile, that what has been before reckoned a *fruitful field*, shall, in comparison with it, *be counted for a forest;* that *the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever;* and finally, that the labours of the Lord's servants, during these happy times, shall be like that of the husbandman, who *sows beside all waters*, or who cultivates a rich and well-watered soil. It is also

during the Messiah's reign, that we are warranted to expect great things to arise from small beginnings. *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon.*

The influence of these effects on our present and future happiness, is clearly intimated by our Lord, where he represents the prophets as *sowing*, and the apostles as *reaping*, or *entering into their labours.—He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.* The reapers in Christ's harvest *receive wages* in the enjoyments which accompany their toils in the present life: they *gather fruit unto life eternal* in the effects of them contributing to enhance the blessedness of heaven: and this blessedness is not confined to those who have been the most successful in their day, but extend to others, who have prepared the way before them. According to this representation, Isaiah and Jeremiah, who sowed in tears, will reap in joy; *rejoicing together* with Peter and Paul and John, and all the New Testament ministers; viewing, in their successes, the happy fruits of their own disregarded labours.

In this view, the labours of Paul and his companions must be considered as extending, in their effects, to the very end of time. All the true religion that has blessed the different parts of the earth within the last seventeen hundred years, has arisen from their labours; and all the souls which have ascended to glory, or shall yet ascend, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, shall bless the Lord of the harvest for sending them. When we see these heroic worthies sowing the seed of life, reproached in one city, imprisoned in another, and stoned in another, we think it discouraging work. All that they could accomplish was but little, in comparison of the multitudes of men who inhabited the earth; and that little must be at great expense. It was a handful of corn cast upon the top of a mountain—a most unpromising soil. They, indeed, saw that the hand of the Lord was with them; but, probably, they had no conception of the extent to which the effects of their labours would reach. If Paul and Silas rejoiced and sang praises in the prison of Philippi, what would have been their joy, could they have foreseen that myriads of myriads in this European quar-

ter of the world would receive the testimony which they should leave behind them, and follow them to glory?

But all these effects are manifest to them in the heavenly world. There they see the harvest which had arisen from the handful of corn, waving before the wind, like the trees of the vast and conspicuous forest of Mount Libanus. Every hour, if I may so speak, souls are arrived at those happy regions, who hail them as their spiritual fathers, and who shall be their crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

The joy of the apostles will not prevent later labourers from possessing the immediate fruit of their toils, any more than that of the prophets will prevent them from possessing theirs: *both they that sow and they that reap will rejoice together.*

Nor is this encouraging truth to be confined to the apostles, or to men of eminence. He who received but two talents had the approbation of his Lord, equally with him who had received five. The reward, as promised in the gospel, will not be so much according to the talents we possess, as the use we make of them; nor so much in respect of our success, as of our fidelity. Many a servant of Christ has spent the greater part of his life with but little apparent success. His charges it may be, was small at the beginning, and he has not been able to enlarge it. He has witnessed but few appearances of a divine change in his congregation; and some of those, who, for a time, afforded him hope, have turned back. Under such circumstances, his heart has often sunk within him; often has he sighed in secret, and thought within himself, I am a vessel in which the Lord taketh no pleasure! But if, under all this, he be faithful to his trust, and preserve a single eye to the glory of God, his labours will not be lost. The seed which he has sown may spring up after his decease; or he may have prepared the way for another more successful, and when all shall meet in a future state, he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.

Neither is this subject to be confined to ministers. As in Christ's harvest there is employment for every description of labourers, so there is reason to believe that every thing done for him is productive of some good effect; and will, in some way, glorify his name; which cannot but yield a joyful satisfaction to those who love him.

How grateful are the recollections of a godly parent, when, upon his dying bed, he is able to say to his children ; 'I have taught you the good and the right way ; the things which you have heard and seen in me, do ; and the God of peace shall be with you.' And, though he may not in this world witness those effects which would have rejoiced his heart, yet his labour will not be lost. He may, at the last, be able to present them, saying, 'Here am I, and the children which the Lord hath given me.' Or if some should not be gathered, yet his judgment is with the Lord, and his work with his God.

What a satisfaction must be enjoyed by those who have willingly contributed, in any form, to so glorious a cause as that of Christ ; a cause which he founded by the shedding of his blood ; a cause to which all the tribes of maatyrs cheerfully sacrifice their lives ; a cause in fine, by the prevalence of which the name of God is glorified, and the salvation of our fellow-sinners accomplished.

I close with a few reflections.

1. We learn, from this subject, *how to estimate the importance of our present conduct.* We are fearfully made, but still more fearfully situated. Every thing we do is a seed of futurity, and is daily ripening into heaven or hell. It is here we receive the stamp, or impression, for the whole of our existence. Is it possible that, with a proper sense of this truth, we should trifle with time, or lavish its precious moments in idleness or folly ?

2. By this also, we may *estimate the folly of hypocrisy.* All the labour of a man to appear what he is not, is making preparation for his own confusion. What should we think of a husbandman who sows cockle instead of barley ; and who, having, by early rising and performing his labour in the dark, deceived his neighbours, should congratulate himself for his ingenuity ? Foolish man ! we should say, of what account is it to his neighbour, in comparison of what it is to himself ? It will soon appear what he has been doing !

3. Let us never forget, *that whatever encouragements are afforded us, they are altogether of grace, and through a Mediator.* There is no room for pharisaical pride ; and if such a spirit be at the root

of our labours, it will prove *as rottenness, and the blossom shall go up as dust.*

Do any inquire, *What they must do, that they may work the works of God?* The answer is *This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.* This is the first and chief concern, without which all others will be of no account. While you either openly reject Christianity, or imbibe another gospel, which is not the gospel of Christ, the curse of the Almighty is upon your head, and all your works are no other than *sowing to the flesh.* Come off, without farther delay, come off from that fatal ground. Renounce thy self-dependences, and submit to the righteousness of God; then every thing will be in its proper place. The curse shall no longer be upon thee, nor upon any thing which thou doest. The Lord will rejoice over thee to do thee good. Thou mayest *eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works.*

SERMON VII.

[Preached at the Annual Meeting of the Bedford Union, May 6, 1801.]

NUMB. xiv. 8.

If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us.

You recollect, my brethren, that, when the children of Israel were going up to possess the land which the Lord their God had promised them, they were directed to send spies before them, who should search out the land, and report whether it was good or bad, and whether the inhabitants were strong or weak, few or many. The greater part of these spies proved unfaithful. They brought an evil report of the good land; depreciating its value, magnifying the difficulties of obtaining it, and thus spreading despondency over the hearts of the people. The effect was, that instead of persevering in the undertaking, they were for returning to Egypt.

There were two out of the number, however, who were of another spirit, and whose report was different from that of their companions. *The land*, said they, *which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land, which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them:*

fear them not. These worthies stood alone in their testimony, and the people had well nigh stoned them for it ; but the Lord honoured them : for, of all the generations which came out of Egypt, they only inherited the promise.

Considering the object of the present meeting, you will probably suppose that my thoughts have been employed in drawing a parallel between the undertaking of Israel to subdue the Canaanites, and take possession of their land in the name of Jehovah ; and our undertakings to subdue to the obedience of Christ the hearts of his enemies, both at home and abroad, and, in this manner, take possession of the world for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is true, they have : and, in discoursing upon the subject, I shall first attempt to justify the application by tracing the analogy between the two cases, and then consider the proviso on which we are given to expect success.

I. I shall attempt to justify the application of the subject, by tracing THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE UNDERTAKING OF ISRAEL, AND THE EFFORTS OF CHRISTIANS TO DISSEMINATE THE GOSPEL.

It is allowed, that the imagination, unaccompanied with judgment, will often find resemblances which the sacred writers would have disavowed, as beneath them ; and far be it from me to imitate so puerile and unwarrantable a method of treating the oracles of God : but it appears, to me, that the gift of the holy land to Abraham and his posterity was really *designed* to prefigure the gift of all nations to the Messiah for his inheritance, and that thus it is represented in the scriptures. It is said, in the 72d Psalm, *He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* This promise, I suppose, had immediate reference to the kingdom of Solomon, and signified, that, during his reign, the whole extent of country included in the original promise to Abraham should be actually possessed : but, in a more remote sense, it refers to a greater son of David than Solomon. This is manifest from several passages in the psalm, which are inapplicable to any one but the Messiah. It is his kingdom only which shall *continue as long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations:* Him shall *all nations serve,* and to him shall *all kings bow down ; men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call*

him blessed. Now, considering the promise before-mentioned in this light, it signifies that, like as Israel, during the reign of Solomon, inherited the utmost extent of country promised to them, so the church, during the reign of the Messiah, should possess the utmost extent of country promised to him, which is the whole world, or *the uttermost parts of the earth.* In the joyful prospect of these times, the Psalm concludes: *Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things: and blessed be his glorious name for ever,* AND LET THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY, AMEN, AND AMEN!

The taking possession of Canaan, and the setting up of the true worship of God in it, not only prefigured the kingdom of the Messiah, but were preparatory to it—the foundation of the gospel structure. The carnal Jews, at the coming of our Saviour, it is true, did not enter into these views; and even his own disciples were much in the dark; but the ancient Israelites understood and felt them. *God be merciful unto us,* said they, *and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us*—Wherefore? That *they* might be a holy and happy people? Doubtless this was a part of their desire; but not the whole. They prayed to be blessed, that they might be blessings to the world; that *God's way might be known,* through them, *upon earth, and his saving health among all nations;* that *the people might praise him,* yea, that *all the people might praise him, and all the ends of the earth fear before him.* Canaan was a country situated in the centre of the world, and, therefore, adapted to be the spot on which Jehovah should set up his standard for the subjugation of the world to himself. From hence, the little leaven should diffuse its influence through the earth, till the whole were leavened. Such appears to have been the design of God, in bestowing it upon the posterity of Abraham, and such are the effects which have been actually, though gradually, produced. *Out of Zion* has gone forth *the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

There are several points of dissimilarity, I allow, between the undertaking of the Israelites and that of christians to disseminate the gospel; but, whatever differences there are, they are altogether in our favour. They went forth armed with the temporal

sword; we with the sword of the Spirit: their commission was to destroy men's lives; ours to save their souls; cities, and fields, and vineyards, and olive-yards, were their reward; our hope, and joy, and crown, are sinners rescued from destruction, standing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming, Finally: The people whom they encountered were appointed by the Lord of the universe to utter destruction, as the just demerit of their crimes; and, though some submitted and were spared, yet the invaders were not given to hope, or directed to wait, for a change of this kind in the body of the people; but were commanded to drive them out, and take their place. It is not so with us: we live under a dispensation of mercy: go where we will, we have glad tidings of great joy to communicate. They, having no hopes of the people, might have said, We seek not you, but yours: but our hopes terminate on the people; we, therefore, can say, *We seek not yours, but you.*

There are several important points, however, in which the undertakings are similar. The following have occurred to me, as the most remarkable:

1. The *ultimate object* of the one was to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and to establish the knowledge and worship of the true God; and the same is true of the other. The world, at that time, not a nation exempted, was under the dominion of Satan, enveloped in idolatry, and the abominations which always accompany it; so that, if God had not selected a people for himself, and, after having taught them to fear and obey him, given them a possession among the nations, he had had no people nor name nor worship upon the face of the earth. And what is the state of mankind at present? Not altogether so deplorable: but, whatever difference there may be, it is owing to that divine revelation which God communicated to Israel, and, by them, to the Gentile nations. In Heathen countries, the god of this world reigns uncontrolled. The children of men, from generation to generation, are led captive by him at his will. Much the same may be said of those countries which are overspread by Mahometanism. Nor is it materially otherwise where the corruptions of Popery maintain their sway. And even in our own country, where the scriptures are read in the

native language, there are but few who pay any serious attention to them. Is it not evident, to an impartial spectator, that the great body of the people are practical Atheists, living without hope, and without God in the world? The number of worshippers, including even the laxest and most inattentive, in all our cities, and, I fear, in most of our towns and villages, is few, when compared with those who attend upon no worship at all. In the earlier times of the Reformation, whatever defects might exist with respect to church-government and discipline, the doctrine of salvation by the cross of Christ was much more generally preached and believed than at present. Since the great principles of evangelical truth (alike clearly stated in the Articles of the Established Church and in the catechisms and confessions of Dissenters) have been relinquished, and a species of heathen morality substituted in their place, the nation has been almost heathenized. If the Lord had not left us a seed of faithful men, some in the Establishment and some out of it, whose object it has been to propagate the common salvation, and to inculcate the holy practice which becomes it, surely we had, ere now, been as Sodom. Or if, like a certain great nation near home, we had revoked the laws in favour of religious liberty, and massacred, silenced, or banished the faithful witnesses of Christ, surely, like them, we had been lost in the gulf of Infidelity.

2. In invading the country of the Canaanites, Israel went forth by *divine authority;* and the same authority attends our invasion of the empire of sin and Satan. Nothing short of an express commandment could have justified a people in destroying or subjugating another people, whatever might be their moral character: but the Creator of the world had an indisputable right to dispose of any part of it, and to punish transgressors in what manner he pleased. And, though the gospel is far from being injurious to the temporal interests of mankind, yet the opposition to it has been as fierce and as decided, as if it had been aimed to rob them of every thing necessary to their happiness. The servants of Christ have been taught to expect opposition, and all the evils which a world lying in wickedness, and hating to have their repose disturbed, can inflict upon them. And though, by the kind hand of God,

Prince of Peace—the *rod out of the stem of Jesse—God's servant*, whom he upholds; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth—him whom *man despiseth*, and whom the *nation abhorreth—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—the Lord our righteousness—Messiah* the prince—the *branch—the messenger of the covenant*, &c. &c. Thus it was that in the volume of the book it was written of him. Whoever proves to be the Messiah, your fathers rejoiced in the faith of him.

In trying the question, whether the prophecies be fulfilled in Jesus, it will be necessary, for the sake of perspicuity, to class them under different heads, such as time, place, family, &c.

1. The *time* when Messiah should come is clearly marked out in prophecy. It was said by Jacob, when blessing the tribes, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet*, UNTIL SHILOH COME; *and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* All this was true in respect of Jesus. Till he came, though the ten tribes were scattered, Judah continued a people, and retained the government; but soon after his death, they were dispersed among the nations, and have been so ever since. "Kings and princes," says one of your own writers, "we have none." If therefore, Shiloh be not come, he can never come within the limits of time marked out by this prophecy.

Again: It is clearly intimated, in the prophecy of Haggai, for the encouragement of the builders of the second temple, that the Messiah should come *during the standing of that temple;* and that the honour that should be done it by his presence would more than balance its inferiority, in other respects, to the first. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.* All this was literally fulfilled in Jesus. But soon after his death, the second temple was reduced to ashes: if therefore, Jesus was not the Messiah, it is impossible that the prophecy should ever be accomplished.

Again: The prophet Daniel was informed by the angel Gabriel as follows: *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks: and threescore and two weeks, the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst* (or half part) *of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*

That there should be some difficulty in fixing the dates, and other minute particulars, in this prophecy is no more than may be said of many others, which yet, upon the whole, are clear and decisive. The prediction of the seventy years captivity was not understood by Daniel till he had studied the subject with attention: and, though he made out the number of the years, and concluded that they were *about* fulfilled, yet he does not appear to have discovered the exact time of their being so. Nevertheless, the prophecy of seventy years was undoubtedly fulfilled in the Babylonish captivity; and this of seventy weeks of years is as certainly fulfilled in the appearance and death of Jesus. Whether, or not, Christian writers agree as to the exact time when these seventy sabbatical weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, began, thus much is certain, that they must have been fulfilled *about* the time that Jesus appeared and suffered, or they never can be fulfilled. Such was the effect of this and other prophecies upon the minds of the Jewish nation, that about that time there was a general expectation of the Messiah's appearance. Hence, though

fore any thing very considerable is accomplished. At length, the Messiah comes; and, like Joshua by Canaan, takes possession of the Heathen world. At first it seems to have bowed before his word; and, as we should have thought, promised fair to be subdued in a little time. But every new generation that was born, being corrupt from their birth, furnished a body of new recruits to Satan's army: and, as the Canaanites, after the first onset in the times of Joshua, gathered strength, and struggled successfully against that generation of Israelites which succeeded him and forsook the God of their fathers; so, as the church degenerated, the world despised it. Its doctrine, worship, and spirit being corrupted, from being a formidable enemy, the greater part of it becomes a convenient ally, and is employed in subduing the other part, who hold fast the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Thus the war is lengthened out: and now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, we see not all things yet put under him. On the contrary, when reviewing our labours, it often seems to us that we have *wrought no deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.* But let us not despair: *we see Jesus* upon his throne; and as the Canaanites were ultimately driven out, and the kingdom of Israel extended from sea to sea; so, assuredly, it shall be with the kingdom of Christ.

The great disposer of events has, for wise ends, so ordered it, that the progress of things shall be gradual. He designs by this, among other things, to try the faith and patience of sincere people, and to manifest the hypocrisy of others. Hereby scope is afforded both for faith and unbelief. If, like Caleb and Joshua, we be for going forward, we shall not want encouragement; but if, like the others, we be weary of waiting, and our hearts turn back again, we shall not want a handle, or plea, by which to excuse ourselves. God loves that both persons and things should appear to be what they are.

5. The promise was not accomplished, at last, but *by means of ardent, deadly, and persevering struggles;* and such must be the efforts of the church of Christ, ere she will gain the victory over the spirit of wretchedness with which she has to contend. The Canaanites would not give up any thing but at

the point of the sword. Hence the faint-hearted, the indolent, and the weak in faith, were for compromising matters with them. The same spirit which magnified difficulties at a distance, which spake of cities as *great, and walled up to heaven*, and of *the sons of Anak being there*, was for stopping short when they had gained footing in the land, and for *making leagues* with the residue of the people. Thus it has long been in the Christian church : the gospel having obtained a footing in the western nations, we have acted as though we were willing that Satan should enjoy the other parts without molestation. Every Heathen and Mahometan country has seemed to be a city walled up to Heaven, and the inhabitants terrible to us as the sons of Anak. And, even in our native country, an evangelical ministry having obtained a kind of establishment in some places, we have long acted as if we thought the rest were to be given up by consent, and left to perish without any means being used for their salvation! If God means to save any of them, it seems he must bring them under the gospel, or the gospel, in some miraculous manner, to them : whereas the command of the Saviour is that we *go*, and preach it to every creature. All that Israel gained was by dint of sword. It was at the expense of many lives, yea many thousands of lives, that they at last came to the full possession of the land, and that the promises of God were fulfilled towards them. The same may be said of the establishment of Christ's kingdom. It was by ardent and persevering struggles that the gospel was introduced into the various nations, cities, and towns where it now is ; and, in many instances at the expense of life. Thousands of lives were sacrificed to this great object in the times of the apostles, and were I to say millions in succeeding ages, I should probably be within the compass of truth. But we have been so long inured to act under the shadow of civil protection, and without any serious inconvenience to our temporal interests, that we are startled at the difficulties which the ancient Christians would have met with fortitude. They put their lives in their hands, *standing in jeopardy every hour* : and, though we cannot be sufficiently thankful, both to God and the legislature of our country, for the protection we enjoy ; yet we must not make this the condition of our activity for Christ. *He that observeth the wind shall not sow ; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.* If

ever God prosper us, in any great degree, it will be in the exercise of that spirit by which the martyrs obtained a good report.

The above particulars may suffice to show the analogy between the two cases: the object aimed at, the authority acted upon, the promise confided in, its gradual accomplishment, and the means by which this accomplishment is effected, are the same in both: I hope, therefore, the application of the one to the other may be considered as justified.

II. Let us consider THE PROVISO ON WHICH WE ARE WARRANTED TO HOPE FOR SUCCESS. *If the Lord* DELIGHT IN US, *then he will bring us into the land and give it us.*

The term *delight* does not express that divine love to our souls which is the source of our salvation, but a complacency in our character and labours. Thus it is to be understood in the speech of David, when fleeing from the conspiracy of Absalom: *If he say, I have no delight in thee, here I am: let him do with me as seemeth him good!* He could not mean by this, If God have no love to my soul, I submit to be for ever separated from him: for such submission is not required of any who live under a dispensation of mercy: but, If he approve not of me as the head of his people, here I am: let him take my life away, as it pleaseth him. The amount is, That if we would hope to succeed in God's work, our character and undertakings must be such as he approves.

1. The *object* which we pursue must be simply the cause of God, unmixed with worldly policy, or party interest. It has been insinuated that under the colour of disseminating evangelical doctrine, we seek to gain over the common people, and so to obtain, it should seem, an ascendency in government.* If it be so, we

* To this effect were the insinuations of Professor Robinson, concerning the efforts of Mr. Robert Haldane and his friends, in a proposed mission to Hindoosthan. The modest and dignified manner in which that gentleman repelled the accusation, and even forced his accuser to retract it, may be seen in his late excellent pamphlet on that subject. The Bishop of Rochester, in a late address to his Clergy, after representing the Socinians as aiming at this object, adds as follows: "Still the operations of the enemy are going on—still going on by stratagem—the stratagem still a pretence of reformation. But the reformation, the very reverse of what was before attempted. Instead

may be assured the Lord will take no delight in us. The work, in this case, must be altogether of man, and will come to nothing; yea, and to nothing let it come. The desire and prayer of my

of divesting religion of its mysteries, and reducing it to a mere philosophy in speculation, and to a mere morality in practice, the plan is now to affect great zeal for orthodoxy; to make great pretensions to an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit's influence; to alienate the minds of the people from the established Clergy, by representing them as sordid worldlings, without any concern about the souls of men, indifferent to the religion which they ought to teach, and to which the laity are attached, and destitute of the Spirit of God. In many parts of the kingdom new conventicles have been opened, in great number; and congregations formed of one knows not what denomination."

If the religion of Jesus must be reproached, it is best that it should be done in some such manner as this. Had the Bishop of Rochester preserved any regard to candour, or moderation, he might have been believed; as it is, it may be presumed there can be but little danger of it. None, except those who are as deeply prejudiced as himself, can, for a moment, imagine that the late attempts for disseminating evangelical doctrine are the operations of a political scheme, carried on by infidels in disguise. A very small acquaintance with men and things must convince any one that the *persons concerned in this work are not the same* as those who affected to reform the church by reducing the mysteries of the gospel to "a mere philosophy in speculation, and to a mere morality in practice." Men of that description were never possessed of zeal enough for such kind of work. We might as soon expect to see Bishop Horsely himself turn village-preacher as them.

In repelling such language as the above, it is difficult to keep clear of the acrimony by which it is dictated. Suffice it to say, I am conscious that no such plan or design every occupied my mind for a moment: nor am I acquainted with any person whom I have ground to suspect any such thing. I know persons who are, as I believe, sinfully prejudiced against government, and of whose spirit and conversation I seldom fail to express my dislike: but I know not an individual whom I have any reason to think engages in village-preaching with so mean and base an end as that which is suggested by this prelate.

The picture which is drawn of the Clergy is, doubtless unpleasant; and, if applied to the serious part of them, far from just: whence it was taken is best know to the writer. I am inclined to think, however, that though he has represented it as the language of village preachers, he would be unable to prove such charges against them. There may be violent individuals engaged in village-preaching, who may take pleasure in exposing the immoralities of the Clergy: and if they have half the bitterness on the one side which this writer

heart is, that all such undertakings, if such there be, may perish! The kingdom of Christ will never prosper in those hands which make it only the secondary object of their pursuit, even though the first were lawful; and much less when it is made to subserve that which is itself sinful. But, if the divine glory be the object of our labours, the work is of God; God himself will delight in us, and every attempt to oppose it will be found to be fighting against God.

There is another way in which, I apprehend, we are in much more danger of erring: I mean, by an improper attachment to *party interest*. I am far from thinking it a sin to be of a party. Every good man ought to rank with that denomination which, in his judgment, approaches nearest to the mind of Christ: but this is very different from having our labours directed to the promotion of a party, *as such*. If so, we shall see little or no excellence in whatever is done by others, and feel little or no pleasure in the success which God is pleased to give them: but, while this is our spirit, whatever be our zeal, we are serving ourselves rather than Christ, and may be certain the Lord will not delight in us to do us good. The only spirit in which the Lord takes pleasure is, that which induces us to labour to promote *his* cause, and to rejoice in the prosperity of all denominations *so far as they promote it*.

discovers on the other; they are unworthy of being so employed. Whatever grounds there may be for such charges against numbers of the Clergy, the body of those who have been employed in preaching or reading printed sermons in the villages, have never thought of preferring them, but have confined their attention to the preaching of Jesus Christ.

I have no scruple, however, in saying, if reducing religion to "a mere philosophy in speculation, and a mere morality in practice," be subverting it, it is subverted by great numbers in the Church of England, as well as out of it. And where this is the case, it is the bounden duty of the friends of evangelical truth to labour to introduce it, regardless of the wrath of its adversaries.

The suppression of "conventicles," I doubt not, would be very agreeable to some men: but I have too much confidence in the good sense of the legislature, to suppose that it will suffer its counsels to be swayed by a few violent Churchmen.

2. The *doctrine* we teach must be that of Jesus Christ and him crucified. The person and work of Christ have ever been the corner stone of the Christian fabric; take away his divinity and atonement, all will go to ruins. This is the doctrine taught by the apostles, and which God, in all ages has delighted to honour. It would be found, I believe, on inquiry, that in those times wherein this doctrine has been most cordially embraced the church has been most prosperous, and that almost every declension has been accompanied by a neglect of it. This was the doctrine by which the Reformation was effected; and to what is the Reformation come in those communities where it is rejected? This was the leading theme of the Puritans and Nonconformists; and what are their descendants become who have renounced it? Many of them rank with Infidels, and many who retain the form of Christianity deny the power thereof.

If it be alleged that the Church of Rome retains this doctrine amidst its great apostasy, and some Protestant churches do the same, which, notwithstanding, have exceedingly degenerated; I answer, it is one thing for a community to retain doctrines in its decrees and articles, and another to preach them with faith and love in their ordinary labours. Divine truth requires to be written, not merely with ink and paper, but by the Spirit of God, upon the fleshly tables of the heart. If the Church of Rome had retained the doctrine of Christ's divinity to any purpose, its members would have worshipped him, and not have turned aside to the adoration of saints and relicks; and if his atoning blood and only mediation between God and man had been properly regarded, we had never heard of mediators, pardons, and penances of another kind.

Christ crucified is the central point, in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. There is not a doctrine in the scriptures but what bears an important relation to it. Would we understand the glory of the divine character and government? It is seen in perfection *in the face of Jesus Christ.* Would we learn the evil of sin, and our perishing condition as sinners? Each is manifested in his sufferings. All the blessings of grace and glory are given us in him, and for his sake. Practical religion

finds its most powerful motives in his dying love. That doctrine of which Christ is not the sum and substance, is not the gospel; and that morality which has no relation to him, and which is not enforced on evangelical principles, is not Christian, but Heathen.

I do not mean to be the apologist for that fastidious disposition apparent in some hearers, who require that every sermon shall have Christ for its immediate theme, and denominate every thing else legal preaching. His sacred name ought not to be unnaturally forced into our discourses, nor the holy scriptures turned into allegory for the sake of introducing it: but, in order to preach Christ, there is no need of this. If all scripture doctrines and duties bear a relation to him, we have only to keep that relation in view, and to urge practical religion upon those principles. If I leave out Christ in a sermon, and allege that the subject did not admit of his being introduced, I fear it will only prove that my thoughts have not been cast in an evangelical mould. I might as well say, there is a village which has no road to the metropolis, as that there is a scripture doctrine or duty which has no relation to the person and work of Christ. Neither can I justly allege that such a way of preaching would cramp the powers of my soul, and confine me to four or five points in divinity: we may give the utmost scope to our minds, and yet, like the Apostle, determine to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. There is breadth and length and depth and height sufficient in his love to occupy our powers, even though they were ten thousand times larger than they are.

In all our labours, brethren, in the church or in the world, in our native country or among the Heathens, be this our principal theme. In this case, and not otherwise, the Lord will delight in us, will bring us into the land, and give it us for a possession.

3. The *motive* of our undertakings must be pure. God cannot possibly take pleasure in the labours of the *sordid* or the *vain*. Indeed, I do not perceive how, in the greater part of our labours, we can suspect ourselves, or be suspected, of acting from a regard to our worldly advantage. In attempting to carry the gospel among the heathen we certainly can have no such motive; as

every part of the work requires the sacrifice of interest, and that without the most distant prospect of its being restored. And even in carrying what we believe to be evangelical doctrine into the villages of our native country, it is commonly at the expense of both ease and interest. In those labours, however, that are within the vicinity of our respective congregations, in which success may contribute to our temporal advantage, it becomes us to watch over our own hearts. If such a motive should lie concealed among the springs of action, it may procure a blast upon our undertakings. The Lord will have no delight in such preaching; and without him we can do nothing. Or if avarice have no place in us, yet, should we be stimulated by *the desire of applause*, it will be equally offensive to a holy God. The idea of being a Missionary, abroad or at home, may feed the vanity of some minds; and, indeed, there is no man that is proof against such temptations. We have all reason to watch and pray. There is a *woe* hangs over the *idol shepherd; the sword will be upon his arm, and upon his right eye!* I have no suspicion of any one, but merely wish every one to suspect himself. If we secretly wish to appear great among our brethren, to magnify ourselves or our party, or to figure away in the religious world, as persons of extraordinary zeal, all is naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do, and, depend upon it, he will have no delight in us. But if our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light. Those that honour God shall be honoured of him; and however he may prove them for a time, they shall find, in the end, that their labour has not been in vain in the Lord.

4. We must go forth in all our labours as little children, *sensible of our own insufficiency, and depending only upon God.* The first city which Israel besieged, on their passage over Jordan, was won without striking a single blow, but merely walking round it, and sounding their trumpets, according to the command of the Lord. This was doubtless meant to teach them a lesson, at the outset of the war, not to lean upon their strength, or numbers, or valour; but upon the arm of Jehovah. This lesson was ordinarily repeated throughout their generations, whenever led to battle by godly men: instead of filling them with ideas of their own suf-

ficiency, (which is the universal practice of worldly men who have had the command of armies,) they taught them to distrust themselves, and to rely upon their God. This is the spirit by which true religion is distinguished ; and in this spirit we must go forth to subdue the hearts of sinners, or the Lord will have no delight in us, but leave us to fight our battles alone. Thus that eminent man of God, from whose pulpit I now address you, represents the four captains, and their ten thousands, after besieging Mansoul without effect, as presenting their petition to Shaddai, for assistance. The more self-annihilation we possess, the more likely we are to be useful to the souls of men. God has *respect unto the lowly ; but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

5. We must *persevere* in the work of the Lord to the end. When Israel came out of Egypt, I suppose they all intended to go forward, and to possess the land : but when difficulties arose, the great body of them fainted, and were for going back. When an undertaking is new and plausible, many come forward to engage in it : but a time comes when the first flush of spirits subsides, when great and seemingly insurmountable difficulties, present themselves, and when success appears to be much farther off than at the beginning : this is the time for the trial of faith. A few such seasons will commonly thin the ranks of Christian professors; but blessed are they that endure temptation. Those who *followed the Lord fully* were brought into the land. It is possible that our motives may be pure at the outset, and yet, through the strength of temptation, we may be turned aside. The Lord speaks well of the church of Ephesus, as having, for a time, *borne and had patience, and for his name's sake had laboured and not fainted :* yet it follows, *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* This is an example for us to shun. Another follows, namely, the church at Thyatira, for our imitation : *I know thy works, and thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works,* AND THE LAST TO BE MORE THAN THE FIRST.

6. We must exercise *a lively faith* in the power and promise of God. I reserve this remark to the last, because it contains the spirit of the passage, and is a matter of the highest importance. It

was owing to unbelief that the body of the people drew back, and to faith that Joshua and Caleb were for pressing forward. Nor is there any thing of greater importance to the Christian ministry, especially to those engaged in extraordinary labours. He that endeavours to extend the limits of Christ's kingdom, resembles a navigator who engages in a voyage of discovery: he is exposed to ills and dangers which cannot be foreseen, nor provided against. Carrying a doctrine to which all his hearers have a natural and deep-rooted aversion, the difficulties he has to encounter are as islands of ice near the poles, or as rocks in unknown seas; but faith in the power and promise of God is sufficient for all his wants.

Confidence is agreeable to a generous character, while suspicion thrusts a sword into his heart. The former is honourable to him, affording him opportunity of carrying his kind intentions into execution: the latter dishonours him, and lays him under a sort of incapacity of doing good to the party. A generous character will feel impelled by a principle of honour to keep pace with the expectations of those who confide in his goodness and veracity. Nor is this confined to the concerns of men. There is something greatly resembling it in the dealings of God with us. The Lord has magnified his *word* more than all his name; and as faith corresponds with the word, he has bestowed greater honour upon this grace than upon any other. Hence we find such language as the following: *O how great is thy goodness which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.—Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.—The Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy.* Under the New Testament still more is said of this important principle. In almost all the miracles of our Saviour, he made a point of answering to the faith of the parties, or of those that brought them; and where this was wanting, he is represented as under a kind of incapacity to help them. *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. According to your faith be it unto you.—Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—He could there do no mighty works—because of their unbelief.* Nor was this principle honoured merely in miraculous cases:

our Saviour taught his disciples to cherish high expectations from the divine mercy and faithfulness, in their ordinary approaches to a throne of grace. *Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them.*

In recommending a strong and lively faith, I do not mean to encourage that species of confidence which has no foundation in the divine promise. This is not faith, but fancy, or the mere workings of the imagination. Those who, many ages since, engaged in what were called the *holy wars*, desirous of driving out the Turks from Jerusalem, were not wanting of confidence ; but the promise of God was not the ground on which it rested. It was not faith, therefore, but presumption. It was not thus with Israel, in going up against the Canaanites ; nor is it thus with those who labour to extend the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The promise of God is here fully engaged. *He hath sworn by himself, the word is gone out of his mouth in righteousness, and shall not return.* Many passages might be produced in proof that before the end of time, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be universal. I shall select a few : *The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.—I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.—And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.—Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the* WHOLE *was leavened.—The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.* These are the true sayings of God. Surely they afford ground for a strong and lively faith in every effort to disseminate the gospel.

God has not only dealt largely in promises, but has given us abundance of examples of their fulfilment. A large part of scrip-

ture prophecy has already been converted into history. *Unto us a child* is actually *born; unto us a child* is *given; the government* is *upon his shoulder; his name* is *called Wonderful, Councellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* But the same authority which foretold this, has added, *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.* There is also a peculiar pledge given for its fulfilment: *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts*, it is declared, *shall perform this!* Zeal is a fervid affection of the mind, that prompts us to pursue an object with earnestness and perseverance, and to encounter every difficulty that may stand in the way of its accomplishment. From such a spirit, even in men much is to be expected. Yet what is the zeal of creatures? Always feeble, often misguided, disproportionate, or declining. But conceive of it as possessing the heart of the omnipotent God. What an overwhelming thought! The establishment of Christ's kingdom deeply interests him: his thoughts are upon it; all his plans include it; and all that is going on in the world, from generation to generation, is made to subserve it. We draw some encouragement from the zeal of creatures in God's cause. When his servants take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favour the dust thereof, we consider it a hopeful symptom that the Lord is about to arise and have mercy upon it. The importunity and liberality of Christians, the diligence of ministers, and the cries of the souls from under the altar, for the fall of Babylon, may have each their influence: but the zeal of the Lord of Hosts surpasses all. Here is solid rock, for faith to rest upon.

Unbelievers may deride every attempt to turn sinners from the errors of their way; and even believers, while viewing things through sensible mediums, may discover insurmountable difficulties. 'The people will not believe us, nor hearken to our voice: the prejudices of men are almost insuperable in our native country; and if we go abroad they are worse: these *casts*, this *voluptuousness;* this *savage ferocity*, this *treachery* of character.... How can we hope to overcome such obstacles as these?' But all this is only a repetition of the objections of the unbelieving Israelites: *The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are great, and walled up to heaven: and moreover we saw the children*

of Anak there! If we can believe . . . . all things are possible to him that believeth.

Past instances of mercy furnished the church with matter of prayer: *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old! Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?* And why should we not apply the past operations of grace to a similar purpose? That arm has not grown weary which subdued Jewish malignity in the days of pentecost, and overturned Heathen idolatry by the doctrine of the cross.

I think I may add, there is reason to hope that the time when these things shall be accomplished cannot be far off. I have no desire to deal in uncertain conjectures. The prophecies were not designed to make us prophets, nor to gratify an idle curiosity. They contain enough, however, to strengthen our faith, and invigorate our zeal. If we carefully examine the scriptures, though we may not be able to fix times with any certainty, yet we may obtain satisfaction that the day is not *very distant* when the kingdom of Christ shall be universal. The New Testament writers in their times, made use of language which strongly indicates that time itself was far advanced. *The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.—Behold the judge standeth at the door.—The end of all things is at hand.—He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly!* These, and such like passages, I should think, cannot mean less than that in those days they had passed the meridian of time, and entered, as it were, into the afternoon of the world. And now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, what else can be expected, but that things are fast approaching to their final issue? But it is not merely on general grounds that the conclusion rests. The prophet Daniel, in his seventh chapter, describes the successive establishment and overthrow of four great governments, which should each, in its day, rule the great r part of the world. He also speaks of the last of these governments as issuing in ten branches, and describes another, which he calls *a little horn*, as rising from among them. The dominion of this last government was to continue *until a time, times, and the dividing of time.* After this *the judgment should set, and*

they should take away its dominion, to consume and to destroy it unthe end. And then it immediately follows, *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.* There are many things in the prophecies which are hard to be understood: but this seems to be very clear. There can be no doub of the four great governments being the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Now these have each appeared upon the stage, and are gone into perdition. The division of the Roman empire into a number of lesser governments, such as continue in Europe to this day, and, among them, exercise a dominion over the rest of the world equal to what was formerly exercised by the Romans, is doubtless signified by the *ten horns* of the fourth beast. Nor can we be at a loss to know what that government is which is signified by a *little horn*, which rose up from among the ten horns, which speaketh *great words against the Most High, and weareth out the saints of the Most High.* We have seen its rise, felt its reign, and in part rejoiced in its overthrow. The period alluded to as the term of its existence, is manifestly the same as that which John, in the Revelation, calls *forty and two months*, or *one thousand two hundred and sixty days* during which *the holy city should be trodden under foot, the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth*, and the true church have her abode *in the wilderness*, in a manner resembling the state of things in Jerusalem in the times of Antiochus. More than a thousand of these prophetic days, or years, must have already elapsed. The period itself must be drawing towards a close: and when this is closed, there is an end to every species of Satanic government. That which follows is given to the Son of Man, and to the people of the saints of the Most High. The amount is, We are under the last form of the reign of darkness, and that form is fast dissolving. Surely, the day of the church's redemption draweth nigh!

And while these views afford a joyful prospect to the church of Christ, there is nothing in them which can furnish any just ground of alarm to civil government. There is no reason to imagine that the church of Christ will ever become a political community, exercising dominion over others; but that Christian principles will pervade and rule the governments of the earth. However God

may overrule the tumultuous revolutions of these times, to the making way for his kingdom, his kingdom itself will be entirely different: the wind, the earthquake, and the fire may go before it, but the thing itself will be as a still small voice. It will not come with observation, or outward show. The banners that will be displayed will not be those of sedition and tumult, but of truth and peace. It will be a renovation in the hearts of men; a revolution, in both rulers and subjects, from the slavery of sin to the love of both God and man: and this, as it must produce the establishment of peace and good order, cannot be an object of dread to any who are well disposed. It is not impossible that we may live to see things of which at present we have scarcely any conception: but whether we do, or not, Jesus lives, and his kingdom must increase. And what, if while we are scaling the walls of the enemy, we should a few of us lose our lives? We must die in some way; and can we desire to die in a better cause? Probably many of the Israelites who went up to possess the land with Joshua, perished in the attempt: Yet this was no objection to a perseverance in the cause. In carrying the glad tidings of eternal life to Jews and Gentiles, Stephen and James, with many others, fell sacrifices at an early period: yet no one was discouraged on this account, but rather stimulated to follow their example.

I close with a few words by way of reflection. It becomes us to inquire, each one seriously for himself, whether the little success which we have already experienced may not be owing to this cause—There may be something about us, on account of which God does not delight in us? I mean no reflection upon any; but let each one examine himself. 'What is the secret spring of my zeal? Is the doctrine I preach truly evangelical? Let me not take this matter for granted; but examine whether it quadrates with the scriptures. If half my time be taken up in beating off the rough edges of certain passages, to make them square with my principles, I am not in the gospel scheme. If one part of scripture requires to be passed over, lest I should appear inconsistent, I am not sound in the faith, in God's account; but have imbibed some false system, instead of the gospel; and, while this is

the case, I have no reason to expect that he will delight in me, so as to make me a blessing.'

Finally: Whether we possess the land, or not, *it will be possessed.* Though some of the Israelites perished in the wilderness, that did not overturn the councils of God: the next generation entered into his rest. And though there should be so much selfishness, false doctrine, unbelief, or inactivity, about us, as that God should take no delight in us, and refuse to give us the land, yet our children may possess it. God's word will be accomplished. Deliverance will arise to the church of God, whether we do ourselves the honour of serving it, or not. But why do I thus speak? Surely it is the desire of many in this country, and of many in this assembly, to be active, and so to act as to be approved of God.

SERMON VIII.

[Delivered to the Baptist Church meeting in Cannon Street Birmingham, June 23, 1802, at the ordination of Rev. Thomas Morgan, to the Pastoral Office.]

HEB. xiii. 17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

IT is not usual, I believe, for ministers, in their ordinary labours, to dwell upon the obligations of the people of their charge towards them. They feel, probably, that, on such a subject, they might be suspected of partiality to themselves; and, if such a suspicion were indulged, however just and proper their admonitions might be, they would be but of little use, and might operate to their disadvantage. Nor is it a subject that a humble and holy man would ordinarily choose, even though there were no danger of misconstruction: he had rather inspire, in his people, the love of Christ, and of one another, hoping, that, if this prevailed, it would constrain them to whatever was proper towards himself. It does not follow, however, that this species of Christian duty ought never to be insisted on: the glory of God, the success of

the church, and the spiritual advantage of individuals will be found to be involved in it. No man could more strenuously renounce an undue assumption of power than the apostle Paul: in many instances, he forebore to insist upon the authority that Christ had given him; yet, when addressing the churches in the behalf of others, he uniformly insists upon the treatment which private members owe to their pastors, as well as upon other relative duties. To this I may add, if there be any one time in which an exhortation on this subject is peculiarly seasonable, it is when the relation between pastor and people is publicly solemnized. I shall, therefore, proceed to explain and inforce the exhortation which I have read to you.

I. Let us endeavour to ascertain WHERIN CONSISTS THAT OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION WHICH IS REQUIRED OF A PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR PASTOR. The very terms *rule*, *obey*, and *submit*, may be grating, in the ears of some; and true it is, that there have been great abuses of these things: a great deal of priestly domination has been exercised in the name of Christ. Yet there must be *rule* in the church of Christ, as well as in other societies. Without this, it would not be a body, growing up unto him in all things which is the head, even Christ; but a number of scattered bones. Or, if all aspired to rule and guidance, the question of the Apostle would here be applicable: *If the whole were an eye, where were the hearing? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.* Christian ministers are called *overseers*, as having the oversight of the flock, and the principal direction of its concerns.

The church of Christ, however, is not subject to a despotic government. Ministers are forbidden to *lord it over God's heritage.* The power that was given them, and all other officers, ordinary or extraordinary, was for edification, and not for destruction. There are three things which are necessary, in order that the authority of a pastor be legitimate and unobjectionable: namely, that he be freely chosen by the church; that the standard by which he rules be not his own will, but the will of Christ; and that the things which he urges on others be equally binding on himself.

First: It is necessary that your pastor be *freely chosen, by you,* to his sacred office. If he had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove, from the scriptures, that you were bound to *obey,* or *submit* to him. Should it be alleged, that pastors are represented as the *gifts of God.* and such as the *Holy Spirit hath made overseers;* I should answer, True; but the Holy Spirit performs this work, not immediately, but mediately, by inclining the hearts of his people to choose them. No one, indeed, pretends that it is done immediately. Human choice is, in all cases, concerned; and the only question is, whether it be by that of the people, or of some one, or more, that shall choose on their behalf. The primitive churches elected their own officers. The apostles ordained them; but it was by the suffrage of the people. The power of *election* was with them; and with them it continued, during the purest ages of the church. If the primitive pastors had been chosen by the apostles, it had also been their province to have rejected or silenced them, as occasion should require; but when false teachers arose among the Corinthians and the Galatians, we do not find these churches, not even the purest part of them, applying to the Apostle, but the Apostle to them, for their removal. The false teachers of primitive times, ingratiated themselves with the people, and despised the apostles: an incontestable proof this, to every one acquainted with human nature, where the powers of election and rejection lie. If your pastor, I say again, had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove, from the scriptures, that you were bound to obey, or submit to him. But it is not so. You have heard him and known him; and, from an observation of his spirit and conduct, and an experience of the advantages of his ministry, you have chosen him to watch over you in the Lord.

Secondly: *The rule* to which you are required to yield obedience and subjection, *is not his will, but the will of Christ.* Pastors are that to a church, which the executive powers, or magistrates,

of a free country are to the state—the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law. If your pastors teach any other doctrine, or inculcate any other duties, than what Christ has left on record, obey him not ; but, while urging these, it is at your peril to resist him; for, resisting him, you resist him that sent him. It is in this view, as teaching *divine* truth, and enforcing *divine* commands, that the servants of God, in all ages, have been invested with *divine* authority. Of the sons of Levi, it was said, they shall teach Jacob *thy judgments*, and Israel *thy law ;* and, upon this ground, it was added, *Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands : smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.* Here lay the sin of Korah and his company, of Elymas the sorcerer, and of Alexander the coppersmith : they each, by resisting the servants of God in the proper execution of their work, resisted God, and brought upon themselves the sorest of judgments.

Thirdly : The things which he urges upon you, *are equally binding upon himself.* When he exhibits to you the only name given under heaven, among men, by which you can be saved, and charges you, on pain of eternal damnation, not to neglect it; remember his own soul also is at stake. And when he exhorts and warns you, if he himself should privately pursue a contrary course, he seals his own destruction.

There are, it is true, those who lade men with heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, to which they themselves will not put one of their fingers; these, however, are not the commands of Christ. Instead of being the commands of Christ, which are not grievous, except to unholy men, these are mere human traditions : but, though they were allowed to be otherwise, the inconsistent conduct of ministers would not exempt either them or you from obligation. Should we enforce the will of Christ upon you, while living in the neglect of it ourselves, woe be unto us ! Yet this will fall upon our own heads. If we be wicked, depose us from our office ; but while we are in it, let not the word of the Lord be disregarded, on our account.

Let me point out a *few particulars*, brethren, in which it is your duty and interest to obey him whom you have chosen to have the rule over you, and to submit yourselves.

1. With respect to *his public ministry*. Do not fly in the face of plain dealing from the pulpit. Good sense, as well as the fear of God, will, I trust, preserve your pastor from dealing in personal reflections, or any thing designed to offend; but do not be unwilling that he should come close to cases and consciences. You may as well have no minister, as one that never makes you feel. I hope the house of God will continue to be to you what it has been; a rest in times of trouble; a house of consolation: but do not go with a desire merely to be comforted. Go, as well, to learn your failings and defects, and in the hope of having them corrected. It is not the mere hearer, but the doer of the word, that is blessed in his work. I hope you will always exercise your judgments as to what you hear, and compare it with the oracles of God; but if you attend preaching *merely as judges of its orthodoxy*, you will derive no advantage to yourselves, and may do much harm to others. It is the humble Christian, who hears that he may be instructed, corrected, and quickened in the ways of God, who will obtain that consolation which the gospel affords.

2. With respect to *his private visits*. You do not expect him to visit you in the character of a saunterer, but of a pastor; and if so it becomes you to be open to a free exchange of sentiments on your best interests. No minister is always alike prepared for profitable conversation, and some much less so than others; but if he perceives in you a desire after it, it will be much more easily introduced. Be free to communicate your cases to him. It will assist him in his preaching more than a library of expositors; and if, while you are conversing with him, he should be directed to impart to you the mind of Christ as suited to your particular case, do not treat it lightly, but submit yourselves to it.

3. In *presiding in your occasional assemblies*. When you meet together as a Christian church, for the adjustment of your concerns, he is entitled to your respect. Every society places so much authority in its president, as shall be necessary to check disorderly individuals, and to preserve a proper decorum. It

will, doubtless, become him, especially while he is a young man, to be gentle and temperate in the exercise of authority: and it will no less become you to submit to it. When churches enter into disputes with heat and bitterness, when all are speakers, and respect is paid to no one more than to another, they debase themselves below the character even of civilized societies.

4. In *the private reproofs* which he may have occasion to administer. You do not wish that your pastor should deal in personal reflections from the pulpit; yet there are cases in which reproof requires to be personal; he must, therefore, if he discharge his duty, be free and faithful in telling you what he sees amiss in you. It has long appeared to me, that there are some species of faults, in individual members, which are not proper objects of church censure, but of pastoral admonition; such as spiritual declensions, hesitating on important truths, neglect of religious duties, worldly anxiety, and the early approaches to any evil course. A faithful pastor, with an eye of watchful tenderness, will perceive the first symptoms of spiritual disorder, and by a timely hint, will counteract its operations; whereas if nothing be said or done, till the case requires the censure of the church, the party may be excluded but is seldom recovered. You may easily suppose this to be a self-denying work for your pastor; he had much rather visit you with a smile of affectionate congratulation: yet it may be of the first importance to you and to the church. Do not render this disagreeable part of his work more disagreeable, by an irritable and resentful disposition; but receive reproofs with candour. *Correction may be grievous to him that forsaketh the way; but he that hateth reproof shall die.*

II. Let us observe the IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION ARE ENFORCED. These, you will perceive, are partly taken from the regard you bear to yourselves—*they watch for your souls;* partly from your sympathy with them—*that they may do it with joy and not with grief*: and even that part which seems to respect their comfort, ultimately concerns your own; for, if they discharge their work with grief, *that will be unprofitable for you.* Give us your serious and candid attention, brethren, while we review these important motives.

1. Your pastor *watches for your souls.* Your salvation let me presume, will be his great concern; and, while pursuing this, you may well be expected to concur with him, and submit yourselves to him in the Lord. You would submit to a surgeon, who was performing an operation to save your life; or to a counsellor, who should offer you his advice for the security of your property; or to a commander who should lead you forth to save your country: but these are inferior objects, when compared with your soul. Observe the force of every term.

They *watch.* The word literally signifies *to keep awake.* Here, it denotes vigilance. Ministers are as watchmen on the walls, or in the streets of a city, by whose care and fidelity the inhabitants enjoy security. Their work is to rise early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of care; for so it is that God giveth his beloved sleep. Aware of your temptations and dangers, he must be continually on the watch, that he may be ready to give the alarm. He may be thinking and caring and praying for you, when you think but little of him, and perhaps in some instances, when you think but little of yourselves. Do not hinder him, but help him in his work.

They watch *for* you. Recollect, that you are watched on all sides, but not in this manner. Satan watches you; but it is that he may seize his opportunity to destroy you. He watches you as a wolf does a sheep-fold; but your pastor, as a faithful shepherd, to protect and save you. The world also will watch you, and that with the eye of an enemy, waiting for your halting; but he, with the tender solicitude of a father, to do you good. Do not oppose him in this, his important work.

They watch for your *souls.* If your pastor were stationed to watch over your health, property, or life, and should discharge his trust with skill and fidelity, you would think him worthy of your esteem; but it is not for these things that he is principally concerned. He would doubtless be happy to do you good in any way; but neither of these employments is his peculiar province. You employ other persons to watch for you in such matters. Nothing less than your immortal interests must engage his attention. He watches for that, compared with which kingdoms and empires

are but trifles; for that, which, if gained, all is gained; and which, if lost, all is lost, and lost forever. Do not resist him in his work, but concur with him.

They watch *as those that must give acconnt.* How important a station! There is an account for every one to give of himself; but a pastor has not only to do this in common with his people, but must also give account of them. At his hands the chief Shepherd will require it. And what will be the account of your pastor? Will he be able to say, concerning you, *Here I am, and the children whom the Lord hath given me?* O that he might! But it is much to be feared, that some of you, who are this day committed to his charge, will in that day be missing! And what account will he then have to give? Will he not have to say, 'Lord, some of them have neglected thy word; some have resisted it; some have reproached me for preaching it; some have deserted it, and turned aside after lying vanities; some, who have continued, have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved: hearing, they have heard and not understood; seeing, they have seen and not perceived; their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed?' And what if, when interrogated, he should not be able to acquit himself? What if it should prove that he did not warn you, nor seek after you, nor care for you? Ah, then you will perish, and your blood will be required at his hand! Who, alas! who is sufficient for these things? At all events, for your own sake, and for his sake, do not hinder him in his work. Woe unto him, if he preach not the gospel; and woe unto you, if you oppose him in it! Do not object to his dealing faithfully, both in and out of the pulpit, so that it be aimed for your good. Do not hinder him in the work of reproof, by siding with transgressors. In short, if you have any regard to your own souls, or the souls of others, obey the counsels of heaven, which are communicated to you through his ministry, and submit yourselves.

2. The discharge of this his work will be either *joy or grief*, according to the spirit of the people among whom he labours. You do not wish, I dare say, to grieve and distress a servant of

Christ. Better would it be never to have chosen him, than to break his heart: yet such things are!

If, *in his public preaching*, he have a zealous, generous, modest, attentive, wise, and affectionate people; constant and early, in attending; candid and tender-hearted, in hearing; and desirous of obtaining some spiritual advantage from all they hear; you cannot conceive what *joy* it will afford him. He will pray for you, and preach to you, with abundantly the more interest. And, this being the case, it may contribute not a little to the success of his labours; for God works not only by the word preached, but by the effects of it in the spirit of believers. The Apostle supposes, that some, on whom the word itself had no influence, might yet be won by the chaste conversation of the godly females. But if he have a slothful, selfish, cold-hearted, cavilling, conceited, and contentious audience, what a source of *grief* must it be to him! The meekest of men was overcome by such a people, and tempted to wish that God would *kill him out of hand*, rather than continue to cause him thus to *see his wretchedness.*

If, *in adjusting the concerns of the church*, every individual consider that others have understanding, as well as himself, and have the same right to be heard and regarded; if all strive to act in concert, and never oppose a measure from humour, but merely from conscience, or a persuasion that it is wrong; such things, to a pastor, must needs be a source of *joy.* But, if pride and self-will prevail, they will produce confusion and every evil work; and this, if he have any regard to religion, or to you, will be the *grief* of his soul.

If the deacons, whom you have chosen to be helpers in the truth, be wise, faithful, active, and tender-hearted; ready to stand by their pastor in every right cause; willing to impart the counsel of maturer years; and careful to preserve the purity and peace of the church; his work will be discharged with *joy.* But, if they mind earthly things, and leave all to him; or though they should be active, yet if it be with the spirit of a Diotrephes; instead of diminishing his load, they will increase it, and render his work a daily *grief.*

If, *in the exercise of discipline*, there be a unity of heart, a willingness to follow God's word, whoever may be affected by it; if, like the tribe of Levi, you in such matters *know not your father, nor your mother, nor acknowledge your brethren, nor know your own children; but observe God's word, and keep his covenant;* this, to an upright man, will be a source of *joy* and solid satisfaction. But, if, whenever a censure requires to be inflicted, no unanimity can be obtained; if regard be had to friends and family connexions, to the setting aside of Christ's revealed will; nothing will be done with effect. The zeal of a few will be attributed to prejudice; and the person concerned, instead of being convinced and humbled, will be hardened in his sin. Thus the work of the ministry will be a burden of *grief*.

Finally: If you be a spiritual, affectionate, and peaceable *people*, your pastor will perform his work with *joy;* but if you be carnal and contentious; if there be whisperings, swellings, tumults, party attachments, jealousies, antipathies, scandals; alas! he may sow, but it will be among thorns; he may preach, but it will be with *a heavy heart*.

3. You cannot cause the work of your pastor to be grievous, but *at your own expense:* it will be *unprofitable for you*. It is to no purpose that you have a pastor ordained over you in the Lord, unless his ministry be *profitable* to you. Every thing, therefore, which promotes this end, should be carefully cherished; and every thing that hinders it, as carefully avoided. But profit under a ministry greatly depends, under God, upon *mutual attachment*. I do not mean to commend that fondness and partiality that would render you the devotees of a man, or incapacitate you for hearing any other preaching than his. They that cannot edify save under one minister, give sufficient proof that they do not truly edify under him. But there is an attachment between a pastor and a people that is highly necessary; as, without it, attendance on public worship would, in a great measure, cease to be an enjoyment. This attachment, my brethren, should begin with you, and be cherished by a course of kind and faithful treatment; delicately meeting his wants, gradually inspiring his confidence, tenderly participating in his afflictions, and I may add, if occasion require it, affectionately

suggesting to him his faults and defects. By these means, he will insensibly be attached to you, in return; and will prefer preaching at home, to all his occasional labours in other places. By an acquaintance with your cases, his preaching will be seasonable and savoury, proceeding from the fulness of his heart. Of such words it may well be said, *How good they are!* But I need not enlarge upon these things to *you*. Never, perhaps, were they more fully exemplified, than in the person of your late affectionate and beloved pastor. You loved him for the truth's sake that dwelt in him; and he, on the other hand, was not only willing to impart unto you the gospel of God, but his own soul also, because ye were dear unto him. May the same spirit be cherished between you and your present pastor!

Love is the grand secret to make you all happy. Love, however, is a tender plant; a slight blast of unkindness will greatly injure it. If you grieve him through inadvertency, come to an early explanation. If unkindness be repeated, his attachment to you will be weakened, and then yours to him will be the same. This will be followed by various misunderstandings, slights, distances, and offences, the issue of which may be a rooted antipathy; and when this enters, all profit under a ministry is at an end. If he could preach like an angel, all were in vain, so far as relates to your advantage.

From these remarks, you see and feel, my brethren, that if your pastor performs his work with *grief*, it will be at your expense; or, that every kind of treatment that wounds his spirit, undermines your own welfare. Study, therefore, by all means, to render it his *joy;* which will turn to your account: study, by a constant discharge of kind offices, to endear yourselves and your families to him; by an inviting intimacy in spiritual things, to know and be known by him; and by a holy, humble, and uniform conduct, in the world and in the church, to enable him to look the enemies of religion in the face, while he proclaims its holy efficacy.

The reward of a true pastor is in the people of his charge, in their sanctification and salvation. What else is his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Do not withhold from the labourer his

hire! You may be his hope, without being his joy; and his hope and joy for a season, without being his crown of rejoicing in the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming: but need I say that this will be unprofitable for you! If he have a full reward of his labour, you must be his hope, and joy, and crown. Brethren, consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

SERMON IX.

[Delivered at Kettering, Aug. 14, 1803, at a time of threatened invasion.]

JER. xxix. 7.

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

IN the course of human events, cases may be expected to occur, in which a serious mind may be at a loss, with respect to the path of duty. Presuming, my brethren, that such may be the situation of some of you, at this momentous crisis; a crisis in which your country, menaced by an unprincipled, powerful, and malignant foe, calls upon you to arm in its defence; I take the liberty of freely imparting to you my sentiments on the subject.

When a part of the Jewish people were carried captives to Babylon, ten years, or thereabouts, before the entire ruin of the city and temple, they must have felt much at a loss, in determining upon what was duty. Though Jeconiah, their king, was carried captive with them, yet the government was still continued under Zedekiah; and there were not wanting prophets, such as they

were, who encouraged in them the hopes of a speedy return. To settle their minds on this subject, Jeremiah, the prophet, addressed the following letter to them, in the name of the Lord: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished: and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.*

I do not suppose that the case of these people applies exactly to ours; but the difference is of such a nature as to heighten our obligations. They were in a foreign land; a land where there was nothing to excite their attachment, but every thing to provoke their dislike. They had enjoyed all the advantages of freedom and independence, but were now reduced to a state of slavery. Nor were they enslaved only: to injury was added insult. They that led them captives required of them mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion! Revenge, in such circumstances, must have seemed natural; and, if a foreign invader, like Cyrus, had placed an army before their walls, it had been excusable, one would have thought, not only to have wished him success, but, if an opportunity had offered, to have joined an insurrection in aid of him: yet nothing like this is allowed. When Cyrus actually took this great city, it does not appear that the Jews did any thing to assist him. Their duty was to seek the welfare of the city, and to pray to the Lord for it, leaving it to the great Disposer of all events to deliver them in his own time; and this, not merely as being right, but wise: *In their peace ye shall have peace.*

Now, if such was the duty of men in their circumstances, can there be any doubt with respect to ours? Ought we not to seek the good of our native land; the land of our fathers' sepulchres; a land, where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws, administered under a paternal prince; a land, where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in

any other country in Europe; a land, where God has been known for many centuries as a refuge; a land, in fine, where there are greater opportunities for propagating the gospel, both at home and abroad, than in any nation under heaven? Need I add to this, that the invader was to them a deliverer; but to us, beyond all doubt, would be a destroyer.

Our object, this evening, will be partly to inquire into the duty of religious people towards their country, and partly to consider the motive by which it is enforced.

I. Inquire into THE DUTY OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR COUNTRY. Though, as Christians, we are not of the world, and ought not to be conformed to it; yet, being in it, we are under various obligations to those about us. As husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, &c. we cannot be insensible that others have a claim upon us, as well as we upon them; and it is the same as members of a community united under one civil government. If we were rulers, our country would have a serious claim upon us as rulers; and as we are subjects, it has a serious claim upon us as subjects. The manner in which we discharge these relative duties contributes not a little to the formation of our character, both in the sight of God and man.

The directions given to the Jewish captives were comprised in two things; *seeking the peace of the city*, and *praying to the Lord for it*. These directions are very comprehensive; and apply to us, as we have seen, much more forcibly than they did to the people to whom they were immediately addressed. Let us inquire, more particularly, what is included in them.

Seek the peace of the city. The term here rendered *peace*, (שלם) signifies, not merely an exemption from wars and insurrections, but prosperity in general. It amounts, therefore, to saying, Seek the *good*, or *welfare* of the city. Such, brethren, is the conduct required of us, as men and as Christians. We ought to be patriots, or lovers of our country.

To prevent mistakes, however, it is proper to observe, that the patriotism required of us, is not that love of our country which clashes with universal benevolence, or which seeks its prosperity at the expense of the general happiness of mankind. Such was

the patriotism of Greece and Rome; and such is that of all others, where Christian principle is not allowed to direct it. Such, I am ashamed to say, is that with which some have advocated the cause of *negro slavery*. It is necessary, forsooth, to the wealth of this country! No: if my country cannot prosper but at the expense of justice, humanity, and the happiness of mankind, let it be unprosperous! But this is not the case. Righteousness will be found to exalt a nation, and so to be true wisdom. The prosperity which we are directed to seek in behalf of our country involves no ill to any one, except to those who shall attempt its overthrow. Let those who fear not God, nor regard man, engage in schemes of aggrandizement, and let sordid parasites pray for their success. Our concern is to cultivate that patriotism which harmonizes with good will to men. Oh my country, I will lament thy faults! Yet, with all thy faults, I will seek thy good; not only as a Briton, but as a Christian: for my brethren and companions' sakes, I will say-Peace be within thee; because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek thy good!

If we seek the good of our country, we shall certainly *do nothing, and join in nothing, that tends to disturb its peace, or hinder its welfare*. Whoever engages in plots and conspiracies to over, turn its constitution, we shall not. Whoever deals in inflammatory speeches, or, in any manner, sows the seeds of discontent and disaffection, we shall not. Whoever labours to depreciate its governors, supreme or subordinate, in a manner tending to bring government itself into contempt, we shall not. Even in cases wherein we may be compelled to disapprove of measures, we shall either be silent, or express our disapprobation with respect, and with regret. A dutiful son may see a fault in a father; but he will not take pleasure in exposing him. He that can employ his wit in degrading magistrates is not their friend, but their enemy; and he that is an enemy to magistrates is not far from being an enemy to magistracy, and, of course, to his country. A good man may be aggrieved; and being so, may complain. Paul did so, at Philippi. But the character of *a complainer* belongs only to those who *walk after their own lusts*.

If we seek the good of our country, we shall *do every thing in our power to promote its welfare*. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals, in its difficulties. If, indeed, our spirits be tainted with disaffection, we shall be apt to think we do great things by standing aloof from conspiracies, and refraining from inflammatory speeches; but this is no more than may be accomplished by the greatest traitor in the land, merely as a matter of prudence. It becomes Christians to bear positive good will to their country, and to its government, considered *as government*, irrespective of the political party which may have the ascendency. We may have our preferences, and that without blame: but they ought never to prevent a cheerful obedience to the laws, a respectful demeanour towards those who frame, and those who execute them, or a ready co-operation in every measure which the being or well being of the nation may require. The civil power, whatever political party is uppermost, while it maintains the great ends of government, ought, at all times, to be able to reckon upon religious people as its cordial friends: and, if such we be, we shall be willing in times of difficulty, to sacrifice private interest to public good; shall contribute of our substance without murmuring; and, in cases of imminent danger, shall be willing to expose *even our lives*, in its defence.

As the last of these particulars is a subject which deeply interests us at the present juncture, I shall be excused if I endeavour to establish the grounds on which I conceive its obligation to rest.

We know that the *father* of the *faithful*, who was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan, when his kinsman Lot, with his family, were taken captives by a body of plunderers, armed his trained servants, pursued the victors, and bravely recovered the spoil. It was on this occasion that Melchizedek blessed him, saying, *Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand!*

Perhaps it will be said, 'This was antecedent to the times of the New Testament: Jesus taught his disciples not to resist evil; and when Peter drew his sword, he ordered him to put it up again; saying, *All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.*'

You know, my brethren, I have always deprecated war, as one of the greatest calamities: but it it does not follow, form hence, that it is, *in all cases*, unlawful.

Christianity, I allow, is a religion of peace; and, whenever it universally prevails, in the spirit and power of it, wars will be unknown. But so will every other species of injustice; yet, while the world is as it is, some kind of resistance to injustice is necessary, though it may, at some future time, become unnecessary. If our Saviour's command, that we resist not evil. be taken literally and universally, it must have been wrong for Paul to have remonstrated against the magistrates at Philippi; and he himself would not have reproved the person who smote him at the judgment-seat.

I allow, that the sword is the last weapon to which we should have recourse. As *individuals*, it may be lawful, by this instrument, to defend ourselves, or our families, against the attacks of an assassin: but, perhaps, this is the only case in which it is so; and, even there, if it were possible to disarm and confine the party, it were much rather to be chosen, than in that manner to take away his life. Christianity does not allow us, in any case, to retaliate from a principle of revenge. In ordinary injuries, it teaches patience and forbearance. If an adversary *smite us on the one cheek*, we had better *turn to him the other also*, than go about to avenge our own wrongs. The laws of honour, as acted upon in high life, are certainly in direct opposition to the laws of Christ; and various retaliating maxims ordinarily practised among men, will no doubt, be found among the works of the flesh.

And if, *as nations*, we were to act on Christian principles, we should never engage in war, but in our own defence; not for that, till every method of avoiding it had been tried in vain.

Once more: It is allowed, that Christians, *as such*, are not permitted to have recourse to the sword, for the purpose of defending themselves against persecution for the gospel's sake. No weapon is admissible in this warfare but *truth*, whatever be the consequence. We may remonstrate, as Paul did at Philippi, and our Lord himself, when unjustly smitten; but it appears to me that this is all. When Peter drew his sword, it was with a desire to

rescue his master from the persecuting hands of his enemies, in the same spirit as when he opposed his going up to Jerusalem; in both which instances he was in the wrong: and the saying of our Saviour, that *all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword,* has commonly been verified, in this sense of it.

I believe it will be found, that, when Christians have resorted to the sword, in order to resist persecution for the gospel's sake, as did the Albigenses, the Bohemians, the French Protestants, and some others, within the last six hundred years, the issue has commonly been, that they have *perished* by it; that is they have been overcome by their enemies, and exterminated; whereas, in cases where their only weapons have been *the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives unto death,* they have overcome. Like Israel in Egypt, the more they have been afflicted, the more they have increased.

But none of these things prove it unlawful to take up arms *as members of civil society, when called upon to do so for the defence of our country.* The ground on which our Saviour refused to let his servants fight for him, that he should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, was, that his was *a kingdom not of this world;* plainly intimating, that if his kingdom had been of this world, a contrary line of conduct had been proper. Now, this is, what every other kingdom is: it is right, therefore, according to our Lord's reasoning, that the subjects of all civil states should *as such,* when required, fight in defence of them.

Has not Christianity, I ask, in the most decided manner, recognized civil government, by requiring Christians to be subject to it? Has it not expressly authorized the legal use of the sword? Christians are warned that the magistrate *beareth not the sword in vain;* and that he is *the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* But, if it be right for the magistrate to bear the sword, and to use it upon evil doers within the realm, it cannot be wrong to use it in repelling invaders from without: and, if it be right on the part of the magistrate, it is right that the subject should assist him in it: for, otherwise, his power would be merely nominal, and he would indeed *bear the sword in vain.*

We have not been used, in things of a civil and moral nature, to consider one law as made for the religious part of a nation, and another for the irreligious. Whatever is the duty of one, allowing for different talents and situations in life, is the duty of all. If, therefore, it be not binding upon the former to unite in every necessary measure for the support of civil government, neither is it upon the latter: and if it be binding upon neither, it must follow, that civil government itself ought not to be supported, and that the whole world should be left to become a prey to anarchy or despotism.

Farther: If the use of arms were, of itself, and in all cases, inconsistent with Christianity, *it were a sin to be a soldier:* but nothing like this is held out to us in the New Testament. On the contrary, we there read of two believing *centurions*; and neither of them was reproved on account of his office, or required to relinquish it. We also read of publicans and *soldiers* who came to John to be baptized, each asking, *What shall we do?* The answer to both proceeds on the same principle: They are warned against the abuses of their respective employments; but the employments themselves are tacitly allowed to be lawful. To the one he said, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you*: to the other, *Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.* If either of these occupations had been, in itself, sinful, or inconsistent with that kingdom which it was John's grand object to announce, and into the faith of which his disciples were baptized, he ought on this occasion, to have said so, or, at least, not to have said that which implies the contrary.

If it be objected, that the sinfulness of war would not lie so much at the door of the centurions and soldiers as of the government by whose authority it was proclaimed and executed; I allow there is considerable force in this: but yet, if the thing itself were necessarily, and in all cases, sinful, every party voluntarily concerned in it must have been a partaker of the guilt, though it were in different degrees.

But, granting, it may be said, that war is not, in itself, necessarily sinful; yet it becomes so by the injustice with which it is commonly undertaken and conducted. It is no part of my design

to become the apologist of injustice, on whatever scale it may be practised. But, if wars be allowed to be *generally* undertaken and conducted without a regard to justice, it does not follow that they are *always* so ; and still less that war itself is sinful. In ascertaining the justice or injustice of war, we have nothing to do with the motives of those who engage in it. The question is, Whether it be *in itself* unjust? If it appeared so to me, I should think it my duty to stand aloof from it as far as possible.

There is one thing, however, that requires to be noticed. Before we condemn any measure as unjust, we ought to be in possession of the means of forming a just judgment concerning it.

If a difference arise only between two families, or two individuals, though every person in the neighbourhood may be talking and giving his opinion upon it : yet it is easy to perceive that no one of them is competent to pronounce upon the justice or injustice of either side, till he has acquainted himself with all the circumstances of the case, by patiently hearing it on both sides. How much less, then, are we able to judge of the differences of nations, which are generally not a little complex, both in their origin and bearings ; and of which we know but little, but through the channel of newspapers and vague reports! It is disgusting to hear people, whom no one would think of employing to decide upon a common difference between two neighbours, take upon them to pronounce with the utmost freedom, upon the justice or injustice of national differences. Where those who are constitutionally appointed to judge in such matters have decided in favour of war, however painful it may be to my feelings, as a friend of mankind, I consider it my duty to submit, and to think well of their decision, till by a careful and impartial examination of the grounds of the contest, I am compelled to think otherwise.

After all, there may be cases in which injustice may wear so prominent a feature, that every thinking and impartial mind shall be capable of perceiving it ; and where it does so, the public sense of it will and ought to be expressed. In the *present instance*, however, there seems to be no ground of hesitation. In arming to resist a threatened invasion, we merely act in the defensive ; and not to resist an enemy, whose ambition, under the pretence of

libera ng mankind, has carried desolation wherever he has gone, were to prove ourselves unworthy of the blessings we enjoy. Without taking upon me to decide on the original grounds of the difference, the question at issue with us is, *Is it right that any one nation should seek absolutely to ruin another, and that other not be warranted, and even obliged to resist it?* That such is the object of the enemy, at this time, cannot be reasonably doubted. If my country were engaged in an attempt to ruin France, as a nation, it would be a wicked undertaking; and if I were fully convinced of it, I should both hope and pray that they might be disappointed. Surely, then, I may be equally interested in behalf of my native land!

But there is *another* duty which we owe to our country; which is, That we *pray to the Lord for it.* It is supposed that religious people are a praying people The godly Israelites, when carried into Babylon, were banished from temple-worship; but they still had access to their God. The devotional practice of Daniel was well known among the great men of that city, and proved the occasion of a conspiracy against his life. King Darius knew so much of the character of the Jews as to request an interest in their prayers, in behalf of himself and his sons. My brethren, your country claims an interest in your's; and I trust that if no such claims were preferred, you would, of your own accord, remember it.

You are aware that *all our dependence, as a nation, is upon God;* and, therefore, should importune his assistance. After all the struggles for power, you know that in his sight all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing: he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Indeed this has been acknowledged, and, at times, sensibly felt, by irreligious characters; but, in general, the great body of a nation, it is to be feared, think but little about it. Their dependence is upon an arm of flesh. It may be said, without uncharitableness, of many of our commanders, both by sea and land, as was said of Cyrus, *God hath girded them, though they have not known him.* But by how much you perceive a want of prayer and dependence on God in your countrymen, by so much more should you

be concerned, as much as in you lies, to supply the defect. *The prayer of the righteous man availeth much.*

You are also aware, in some measure, of *the load of guilt that lies upon your country ;* and should, therefore, supplicate mercy on its behalf. I acknowledge myself to have much greater fear from this quarter, than from the boasting menaces of a vain man. If our iniquities provoke not the Lord to deliver us into his hand, his schemes and devices will come to nothing. When I think, among other things, of the detestable traffic before alluded to, in which we have taken so conspicuous a part, and have shed so much innocent blood, I tremble! When we have fasted and prayed, I have seemed to hear the voice of God, saying unto us, *Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke !* Yet, peradventure, for his own name's sake, or from a regard to his own cause, which is here singularly protected, the Lord may hearken to our prayers, and save us from deserved ruin. We know that Sodom itself would have been spared, if *ten* righteous men could have been found in her. I proceed to consider,

II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE ENFORCED : *In the peace thereof shall ye have peace.*

The Lord hath so wisely and mercifully interwoven the interests of mankind, as to furnish motives to innumerable acts of justice and kindness. We cannot injure others, nor even refrain from doing them good, without injuring ourselves.

The interest of individuals and families are closely connected with those of a country. If the latter prosper, generally, speaking, so do the former ; and if the one be ruined, so must the other. It is impossible to describe, or to conceive beforehand, with any degree of accuracy, the miseries which the success of a foreign enemy, such as we have to deal with, must occasion to private families. To say nothing of the loss of property among the higher and middle classes of people ; (which must be severely felt, as plunder will, undoubtedly, be the grand stimulus of an invading army ;) who can calculate the loss of lives ? Who can contemplate, without horror, the indecent excesses of a victorious, unprincipled, and brutal soldiery ? Let not the poorest man say,

I have nothing to lose. Yes, if men of opulence lose their property, you will lose your employment. You have also a cottage, and perhaps a wife and family, with whom, amidst all your hardships, you live in love: and would it be nothing to you to see your wife and daughters abused, and you yourself unable to protect them, or even to remonstrate, but at the hazard of being thrust through with the bayonet? If no other considerations will induce us to protect our country, and pray to the Lord for it, our own individual and domestic comfort might suffice.

To this may be added, our interests as *Christians*, no less than as men and as families, are interwoven with the well-being of our country. If Christians, while they are in the world, are, as has been already noticed, under various relative obligations, it is not without their receiving, in return, various relative advantages. What those advantages are, we should know to our grief, were we once to lose them. So long have we enjoyed religious liberty in this country, that I fear we are become too insensible of its value. At present, we worship God without interruption. What we might be permitted to do under a government which manifestly hates Christianity, and tolerates it even at home only as a matter of policy, we know not. This, however, is well known, that a large proportion of those unprincipled men, in our own country, who have been labouring to overturn its constitution, have a deep-rooted enmity to the religion of Jesus. May the Lord preserve us, and every part of the united kingdom, from their machinations!

Some among us, to whatever extremities we may be reduced, will be incapable of bearing arms; but they may assist by their property, and in various other ways: even the hands of the aged poor, like those of Moses, may be lifted up in *prayer;* while their countrymen, and it may be their own children, are occupying the post of danger. I know it is the intention of several whom I now address, freely to offer their services at this important period. Should you, dear young people, be called forth in the arduous contest, you will expect an interest in our prayers. Yes, and you will have it. Every one of us; every parent, wife, or Christian friend, if they can pray for any thing, will importune the Lord of Hosts to cover your heads in the day of battle!

Finally: It affords satisfaction to my mind, to be persuaded, that you will avail yourselves of the liberty granted to you, of *declining to learn your exercise on the Lord's day.* Were you called to resist *the landing of the enemy* on that day, or any other work of *necessity*, you would not object to it; but, in other cases, I trust, you will. *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*

SERMON X.

[Delivered in the Jew's Chapel, Church Street Spitalfields, Nov. 19, 1809.]

PSALM xl. 6—8.

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

THOUGH I have preached the gospel between thirty and forty years, yet I do not recollect to have ever entered a pulpit with such feelings as at present. In respect of the *subject*, I feel it an honour to plead the cause of my Lord and Saviour; but I am not without apprehensions, lest it should suffer through my manner of pleading it. I must, therefore, intreat, that if any thing which may be delivered should be found to be improper, you would impute it, not to the cause, but to the imperfection of the advocate. I have also some peculiar feelings on account of the *audience*, part of which, I am given to understand, are of the house of Israel. I cannot help recalling to mind the debt we owe to that distinguished people. They have been treated with both cruelty and contempt by men professing Christianity; but surely not by Christians! To

them, under God, we are indebted for a Bible, for a Saviour, and for all that we know of the one living and true God. Who, then, will not join me in the language of the Apostle? *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.*

The passage on which I shall found what I have to offer, is in the 40th Psalm, the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses.

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

No Christian can doubt whether the passage relates to the Messiah, seeing it is expressly applied to him in the New-Testament; and if a Jew should raise an objection, he will find it difficult, if not impossible, to give a fair exposition of it on any other principle. Who else, with propriety, could use the language here used? Certainly, David could not. Whether the Messiah, therefore, be already come, as we believe, or be yet to come, as the body of the Jewish nation believes, it must be of his coming that the prophet speaks. The question at issue between them and us is, not whether the scriptures predict and characterize the Messiah; but, whether these predictions and characters be fulfilled in Jesus?

That we may be able to judge of this question, let it be observed, that there are three characters held up in the passage I have read, as distinguishing the Messiah's coming: viz. That the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic law would, from thence, be superceded; that the great body of scripture prophecy would be accomplished; and, that the will of God would be perfectly fulfilled.

Let us calmly and candidly try the question at issue by these characters.

I. It is intimated, that, whenever the Messiah should come, THE SACRIFICES AND CEREMONIES OF THE MOSAIC LAW WERE TO BE SUPERCEDED BY HIM. *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:—then said I, Lo, I come.* I am aware that modern Jewish wri-

ters contend for the perpetuity of the ceremonial, as well as of the moral law; but in this they are opposed both by scripture and by fact.

As to *scripture*, it is not confined to the passage I have read, nor to a few others: it is common for the sacred writers of the Old Testament to speak of sacrifices and ceremonies in a depreciating strain; such as would not, I presume, have been used, had they been regarded for their own sake, or designed to continue always. Such is the language of the following passages: *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.—Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings: they have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.—Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.—To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?—Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, ye heap up your burnt-offerings with your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. But when I brought your fathers out of Egypt, I spake not unto them of burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.—And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.*

Such, O! ye children of Israel, is the language of your own scriptures. The covenant that was made with your fathers at Mount Sinai was never designed to be perpetual, but to be abolished at the coming of Messiah, as is manifested from the words of the prophet: *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a* NEW *covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquities, and will remember their sins no more.*

From this passage, a New Testament writer argues, (and do you answer it if you can,) *In that he saith a* NEW *covenant, he hath made the first* OLD. *Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.* And respecting their sins and iniquities being remembered no more, where remission of these is, *there is no more offering for sin.*

Is it not, then, in perfect harmony with the tenor of your scriptures, that Messiah when described as coming into the world, should say, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come*: plainly intimating that he would come to accomplish that which could not be accomplished by sacrifices and offerings; and that, as these were but the scaffolding of his temple, when that should be reared, these should of course be taken down.

But I have asserted that, in maintaining the perpetuity of the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, your writers are not only opposed by scripture, but by fact. Whether Messiah the prince be come, or not, sacrifice and oblation have ceased. We

believe they *virtually* ceased when Jesus offered himself a sacrifice, and in a few years after they actually ceased. Those of your nation who believed in Jesus, voluntarily, though gradually ceased to offer them ; and those who did not believe in him were compelled to desist, by the destruction of their city and temple. You may adhere to a few of your ancient ceremonies ; but it can only be like gathering round the ashes of the system : the substance of it is consumed. " The sacrifices of the holy temple," as one of your writers acknowledges, " have ceased."

The amount is, Whether Jesus be the Messiah, or not, his appearance in the world had this character pertaining to it, that it was the period in which the sacrifice and the oblation actually ceased. And it is worthy of your serious inquiry, whether these things can be accomplished in any other than Jesus. Should Messiah the prince come at some future period, as your nation expects, how are the sacrifice and the oblation to cease on his appearance, when they have already ceased nearly eighteen hundred years ? If, therefore, he be not come, he can never come so as to answer this part of the scripture account of him.

II. It is suggested, that whenever Messiah should come, THE GREAT BODY OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN HIM : *In the volume of the book it is written of me.* That the prophetic writings abound in predictions of the Messiah, no Jew will deny : the only question is, are they fulfilled in Jesus ? You know (I speak to them who read the bible) that *the seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent.* You know that God promised Abraham, saying, in *thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. You know that Jacob, when blessing the tribe of Judah, predicted the coming of *Shiloh*, unto whom the gathering of the people should be. You know that Moses spake of *a prophet* that the Lord your God should raise up from the midst of you, like unto him, to whom you were to hearken, on pain of incuring the divine displeasure. You know that the Messiah is prophetically described in the Psalms, and the prophets, under a great variety of forms particularly as the anointed of the Lord—the King—the Lord of David, to whom Jehovah spake—the *child born*, whose name should be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the

Prince of Peace—the *rod out of the stem of Jesse—God's servant*, whom he upholds; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth—him whom *man despiseth*, and whom the *nation abhorreth—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—the Lord our righteousness—Messiah* the prince—the *branch—the messenger of the covenant*, &c. &c. Thus it was that in the volume of the book it was written of him. Whoever proves to be the Messiah, your fathers rejoiced in the faith of him.

In trying the question, whether the prophecies be fulfilled in Jesus, it will be necessary, for the sake of perspicuity, to class them under different heads, such as time, place, family, &c.

1. The *time* when Messiah should come is clearly marked out in prophecy. It was said by Jacob, when blessing the tribes, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet*, UNTIL SHILOH COME; *and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* All this was true in respect of Jesus. Till he came, though the ten tribes were scattered, Judah continued a people, and retained the government; but soon after his death, they were dispersed among the nations, and have been so ever since. "Kings and princes," says one of your own writers, "we have none." If therefore, Shiloh be not come, he can never come within the limits of time marked out by this prophecy.

Again: It is clearly intimated, in the prophecy of Haggai, for the encouragement of the builders of the second temple, that the Messiah should come *during the standing of that temple;* and that the honour that should be done it by his presence would more than balance its inferiority, in other respects, to the first. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.* All this was literally fulfilled in Jesus. But soon after his death, the second temple was reduced to ashes: if therefore, Jesus was not the Messiah, it is impossible that the prophecy should ever be accomplished.

Again: The prophet Daniel was informed by the angel Gabriel as follows: *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks: and threescore and two weeks, the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst* (or half part) *of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*

That there should be some difficulty in fixing the dates, and other minute particulars, in this prophecy is no more than may be said of many others, which yet, upon the whole, are clear and decisive. The prediction of the seventy years captivity was not understood by Daniel till he had studied the subject with attention: and, though he made out the number of the years, and concluded that they were *about* fulfilled, yet he does not appear to have discovered the exact time of their being so. Nevertheless, the prophecy of seventy years was undoubtedly fulfilled in the Babylonish captivity; and this of seventy weeks of years is as certainly fulfilled in the appearance and death of Jesus. Whether, or not, Christian writers agree as to the exact time when these seventy sabbatical weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, began, thus much is certain, that they must have been fulfilled *about* the time that Jesus appeared and suffered, or they never can be fulfilled. Such was the effect of this and other prophecies upon the minds of the Jewish nation, that about that time there was a general expectation of the Messiah's appearance. Hence, though

your fathers rejected Jesus, yet they soon after believed in *Barchocab*, and crowned him as their Messiah; which involved them in a war with the Romans, wherein they are said to have had a thousand cities and fortresses destroyed, and to have lost more than *five huudred and eighty thousand men!* The predicted events which were to be accomplished at the close of these weeks, namely, finishing transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing up the vision and prophecy, and anointing the Most Holy, are in perfect harmony with the New Testament history of Jesus; and, though unbelief may blind the minds of your nation to some of them, yet, the sealing up of the vision and prophecy is a matter so notorious, that one would think it were impossible to deny it. Jesus foretold the destruction of your city and temple by the Romans; and his apostles foretold things relating to the Christian church; but from that time your nation has been, not only 'without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice,' but *without a prophet.*

Moreover, it is predicted by Daniel, that shortly after the Messiah should be cut off, the people of the prince that should come would destroy the city and the sanctuary, and that the end thereof should be desolation. And is it not fact, that about forty years after the death of Jesus, both your city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans; and that such a flood of desolation and misery attended it, as was unexampled in your history, or that of any other nation?

Taking the whole together, it behoves you to consider, whether, if this prophecy be not fulfilled in Jesus, it can ever be fulfilled; and whether it be possible to ascertain the fulfilment of any prophecy.

2. The *place* where Messiah should be born, and where he should principally impart his doctrine, is determined. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* Speaking of Galilee of the nations in connexion with the birth of the child, whose name should be called *the mighty God*, it

is said, *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.* These prophecies were literally and manifestly fulfilled in Jesus; and it is scarcely credible that they can be fulfilled in any other.

3. The *house*, or *family* from whom Messiah should descend, is clearly ascertained. So much is said of his descending from David, that I need not refer to particular proofs; and the rather, as no Jew will deny it. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke, whatever varieties there are between them, agree in tracing his pedigree to David. And though, in both, it is traced in the name of Joseph, yet this appears to be only in conformity to the Jewish custom of tracing no pedigree in the name of a female. The father of Joseph, as mentioned by Luke, seems to have been his father by marriage only; so that it was, in reality, Mary's pedigree that is traced by Luke, though under her husband's name; and this being the *natural* line of descent, and that of Matthew the *legal* one, by which, as a king, he would have inherited the crown, there is no inconsistency between them.

But, whatever supposed difficulties may, at this distance of time, attend the genealogies, it is remarkable that no objection appears to have been made to them in the early ages of Christianity; when had they been incorrect, they might easily have been disproved by the public registries which were then in being. Could the Jews in the time of Jesus have disproved his being of the seed of David, his Messiahship would at once have fallen to the ground; and for this they could not be wanting in inclination. Had there, moreover, been any doubt on this subject, the emperor Domitian, in searching after those who were of the seed of David, would not have ordered the relations of Jesus before him, who, when interrogated, did not deny but that they were descended from him.*

Finally: If the genealogy of Jesus be called in question by the modern Jews, how are they to prove the Messiah, whenever he shall come, to have descended from David; since, if I am not mistaken, they have now no certain genealogies left among them?

* Euseb. Hist, b. 3. ch. 20.

4. The *kind of miracles* that Messiah should perform, is specified. Isaiah, speaking of the coming of God to save his people says, *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.* That such miracles were performed by Jesus, his enemies themselves bare witness, in that they ascribed them to his connexion with Beelzebub. When his Messiahship was questioned, he could say in the presence of many witnesses, *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.* The miracles of Jesus were distinguished by their benevolence. They were all works of mercy, as well as of power; and this accorded with the character given of the Messiah in the seventy-second Pslam, that he *should deliver the needy when he cried; the poor also, and him that had no helper.* Hence, the blind cried out, *Son of David, have* MERCY *on us.*

5. It was predicted of the Messiah, that he should, as a king, be distinguished by his LOWLINESS, entering into Jerusalem, not in a chariot of state, but upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* To fulfil this prophesy, it was necessary that the Messiah should descend from parents in low circumstances; and that the leading people of the land should not accompany him. Had they believed in him, and introduced him as a king, it must have been in another fashion. But it was reserved for the common people and the children to fulfil the prophet's words, by shouting, *Hosanna, to the Son of David; blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord,*

6. It is predicted of the Messiah that he should *suffer and die by the hands of wicked men. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom* MAN DESPISETH, *to him whom* THE NATION ABHORRETH.— *As many were astonished at thee,* (*his* FACE WAS SO MARRED MORE THAN ANY MAN, AND HIS FORM

MORE THAN THE SONS OF MEN,) *so shall he sprinkle many nations.—He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and* WE *hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and* WE *esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was* WOUNDED *for our transgressions, he was* BRUISED *for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his* STRIPES *we are healed.—The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was* CUT OFF OUT OF THE LAND OF THE LIVING; *for the transgression of my people was he stricken. It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.—The Messiah shall be cut off; but not for himself.*

The attempts that have been made to explain away these prophecies, especially the fifty-third of Isaiah, and to make it apply to Israel as a nation, are marks of a desperate cause.*

Is it not marvellous that the enemies of Jesus should so exactly fulfil the scriptures in reproaching and crucifying him; using the very speeches, and inflicting the very cruelties, which it was foretold they would? *He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.—They parted my garments, and for my vesture they did cast lots—They gave me gall to eat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink—They pierced my hands and my feet.* These things were not true of the

* If, as Mr. D. Levi would have it, the sufferer be Israel personified, and that this nation, on account of its injuries, may be said to have borne the iniquities of the whole world, how is it said, that *for the transgressions of* MY PEOPLE *was he stricken?* Does the character of *my people* belong to the world, as distinguished from Israel? or, Is the sufferer and the people for whom he suffered the same?

writers: but they were true of Jesus: in him, therefore, they were fulfilled.

7. It was foretold that the Messiah, after being cut off out of the land of the living, and laid in the grave *should rise from the dead.* Nothing less can be implied by all the promises made to him as the reward of his sufferings: for if he had continued under the power of death, how should he have seen his seed, or prolonged his days? If his kingdom had been that of a mortal man, how could it continue as long as the sun and moon? How was he to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, unless he survived that travail? But more than this, it is foretold that he should rise from the dead at so early a period as *not to see corruption.* The argument of Peter from this passage has never been answered. David said, *Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption:* but David did see corruption; he refers to him, therefore, of whom it is witnessed that he saw no corruption.

Lastly. It was foretold that *the great body of the Jewish nation would not believe in him; and that he would set up his kingdom among the Gentiles.* Such is evidently the meaning of the prophet's complaint, *Who hath believed our report?* and of the Messiah's words, in another part of the same prophecies—*Then I said, I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.*

Your writers complain of ours for interpreting the promises to Israel *spiritually*, and the threatenings *literally*; and tell us that they are not greatly obliged to us for it. But this is misrepresentation. Our writers neither interpret *all* the promises to Israel spiritually, nor *all* the threatenings literally. They expect your return, and that at no very distant period, to your own land: for, besides many Old-Testament prophecies to this effect, he that said concerning the

inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, *They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles* added, UNTIL THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES BE FULFILLED And, in regard of the *threatenings*, the heaviest of them all is that which is expressed by Isaiah, (chap. vi. 9—12.) *Go, tell this people, hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.*

This awful judgment was indeed to issue in *temporal* calamities; but the judgment itself is *spiritual;* a judgment, the nature of which prevents your feeling it, but which is a greater evil than all your other punishments put together.

Such are some of the evidences from which we conclude that Jesus is the true Messiah. Time, place, family, miracles, character, sufferings, resurrection, and rejection by his own countrymen—all are fiulfilled in him. Never was such a body of prophecy given and accomplished in any other case. If you still shut your eyes upon the light, you must abide the consequence: for our parts. we feel the ground upon which we stand, when we say, *We know that the Son of God is come.*

III. It is declared that when the Messiah should come, THE WILL OF GOD WOULD BE PERFECTLY FULFILLED BY HIM—*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.* Agreeably to this, the Messiah is denominated *God's servant, whom he would uphold—in whom he would be glorified—and who should bring Jacob again to him.*

The will of God sometimes denotes what he approves, and sometimes what he appoints. The first is the rule of our conduct, the last of his own; and both we affirm to have been fulfilled by Jesus.

In respect of the Divine *precepts*, his whole life was in perfect conformity to them. All his actions were governed by love. Your fathers were challenged to convince him of sin; and you are

challenged to do the same. Yet your nation reckons him an impostor! Was there ever *such* an impostor? Nay, was there ever such a character seen among men? Should the account given of him by the evangelists be objected to, we might answer from ROUSSEAU,—"The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality, contained in the Gospels; the marks of whose truth are so striking and invincible, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero."*

When a sinful creature is said to have the law of God in his heart, it is said to be *written* there, or *put* in him by the Spirit of God; but of the Messiah it is said to *be* within him. His heart never existed without the impression, and therefore needed not to have *it put* in him. Such was Jesus, and such the spirit that he manifested throughout his life. Let the character, besides him, be named, who dares to rest the truth of his pretensions on his being found to be *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.*

But it was not merely to fulfil the Divine precepts that the Messiah was to come, but to execute his *purpose* in saving lost sinners. Even his obedience to the law was subservient to this, or he could not have been *the Lord our righteousness.* He was God's servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, to give light to the Gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth. In accomplishing this, it behoved him to endure the penalty, as well as obey the precepts, of the law. His *soul must be made an offering for sin;* he must be *cut off out of the land of the living—cut off, but not for himself;* and this that he might make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

Such was the doctrine of the ancient Israelites; and such is that of the New Testament. If it be true, let me intreat you to consider the consequences. While you hold fast the traditions of later ages, you have renounced the religion and the God of your *ancient* fathers; and, in doing this, have rejected the only way of salvation. If the things which I have attempted to establish be true, your fathers crucified the Lord of Glory; and you, by ap-

* Works, Vol. V. pp. 215—218.

proving the deed, make it your own. Moreover, if they be true, Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him ; and they also who pierced him shall wail because of him ! Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

We doubt not but the time will come when your nation shall look on him whom their fathers pierced, and shall mourn as one that mourneth for an only son ; but if it be not so with you, it is the more affecting. To see, at the last judgment, not only Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, but millions of your own unborn posterity, sitting down in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves cast out, is inexpressibly affecting!

I have lately looked into some of the modern Jewish writings. It would be going beyond my limits to attempt an answer to many of their objections to the gospel ; but I will touch upon a few, which struck me in the course of reading.

They find many things spoken in prophecy of the reign of the Messiah, which are not as yet fulfilled in Jesus ; such as the cessation of wars, the restoration of the Jewish nation, &c. &c. and argue from hence, that Jesus is not the Messiah. But it is not said that these effects should *immediately* follow on his appearing. On the contrary, there was to be an *increase* of his government ; yea, a *continued* increase. Jesus may be the Messiah, and his reign may be begun ; while yet, seeing it is not ended, there may be many things at present unfulfilled. The kingdom of the Messiah was to continue as long as the sun and the moon. It was to be *set up* during the reign of the fourth monarchy ; but was itself to survive it, and to stand for ever.

But they object that the doctrine taught by Jesus was *not of a pacific tendency*—that, on the contrary, it was, by his own confession, adapted to produce division and discord—*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but a sword : for I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law ; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* These words, however, (as a child in just reasoning would perceive,) do not express what the gospel is in its own nature ; but what it would *occasion*,

through the hatred of its enemies. They describe not the bitterness of believers against unbelievers, but of unbelievers against believers, for the gospel's sake. The good works of Abel excited the hatred of Cain; but ought Abel to be reproached on this account? The message of peace sent by Hezekiah to the remnant of the ten tribes, inviting them to come up to the passover at Jerusalem, occasioned the same bitter contempt among the idolaters, as the gospel does among the unbelievers of your nation; yet surely it was a pacific message notwithstanding, and ought to have been differently received. We might as well reproach the God of Israel for his messages to Pharaoh having hardened his heart; yea, for his laws given at Sinai having been the occasion of all the wickedness of your fathers; for if he had given them no laws, they had not been guilty of transgressing them!

They farther object, with their fathers, that Jesus pretended to be *the Son of God*, and so was guilty of blasphemy. But if he were the Messiah, he *was* the Son of God. Did not God, in the second Psalm, address him as his Son; and are not the kings and judges of the earth admonished to submit to him under that character?

Much has been said of your believing in *one* God; and who requires you to believe in more than one? If you infer from hence that there can be no plurality of persons in the Godhead, you contradict your own scriptures, as well as ours. Who made the heavens and the earth? Did not *Elohim?* And did he not say, *Let us make man, &c.?* Who wrestled with Jacob? And who appeared to Moses in the bush? Was it not *Jehovah?* Yet he is represented, in both cases, as the Angel, or *Messenger of Jehovah.*

Some of the *precept* of Jesus are objected to, as being impracticable, and Christians are accused of hypocrisy for pretending to respect them, while none of them act up to them; that is, "when they are smitten on one cheek, they do not offer the other."* But this is perverseness. Jesus did not mean it literally; nor did he so exemplify it when smitten before Pilate. Nor do the Jews so

* R. Tobias Goodman's Address to the Committee of the London Society, p. 25.

understand their own commandments. If they do, however, it will follow that they break the sixth commandment in every malefactor whose execution they promote, and even in the killing of animals for food. The manifest design of the precept is to prohibit all private retaliation and revenge ; and to teach us that we ought rather to suffer insult, than to render evil for evil. This may be a hard lesson for a proud spirit ; but it is a true exposition of that law which requires us to *love our neighbour as ourselves* ; which is inconsistent with every feeling of *malice*, whatever provocations may have been received.

But this is not all ; the very agony of Jesus in the garden provokes the malignity of these writers. The anguish of his soul on that occasion, is ascribed to *pusillanimity!* Have they a right then, when judging of his conduct, to take it for granted that he was not the Messiah, and that his death was like that of another man ? Certainly they have not. The objection, if it has any force, is this—His want of fortitude is inconsistent with his being the Messiah. To this we answer, supposing him to be the Messiah, there was nothing inconsistent in any of those fears and sorrows which he expressed. For, if he were the Messiah, he must, according to prophecy, have suffered immediately from the hand of God, as well as from man. *The chastisement of our peace was upon him—It pleased the Lord to bruise him : he hath put him to grief.* But if the agony in the garden were of this description, there was no want of fortitude in it. So far as the wrath of man was concerned, Jesus feared it not. He endured the cross, and even despised the shame : but, under the hand of God, he both feared and felt ; and I never understood before that it was pusillanimous to fear or feel, under the hand of the Almighty ! But we need not marvel ; for he who, in the language of prophecy, complained of having *gall given him for meat, and vinegar for drink*, added, *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten?*

All these objections prove the truth of what was said to Nicodemus, *Except a man be born again*, or, to speak in Jewish language, except he be *circumcised in heart, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* The gospel is a system that cannot be received by a mind blinded by prejudice, or a heart hardened in sin. He that receives

it must repent, as well as believe. It is in hope that God, peradventure, may give some of you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that these addresses are made to you. And, though some may make light of them, and even mock, as the idolaters did at Hezekiah's messengers, yet we will deliver our messages, that, if you perish, your blood may not be required at our hand.

O! ye children of Israel, our hearts' desire and prayer to God for you, is, that you may be saved! Consider, we entreat you, whether you have not forsaken the religion of your forefathers; whether the pslams of David express the feelings of your hearts; whether if you really loved the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob you would not believe in Jesus; whether, if you had just views of your own law, you would not despair of being accepted of God by the works of it; whether your rejection of Jesus be not owing to your insensibility as to your need of a Saviour: whether if you really believed the Old Testament, you would not believe the New; finally, whether the bitter malignity, which is so frequently discovered against Jesus and his followers, be consistent with true religion?

But I shall conclude with a few words to professing *Christians*. I can perceive, by what I have seen of the Jewish writings, how much they avail themselves of our disorders and divisions, to justify their unbelief. Let those who name the name of Christ depart from inquity. Let us beware of valuing ourselves in the name, while we are destitute of the thing. We may yield a sort of assent to the doctrine just delivered, while yet it brings forth no good fruit in us. These are the things that rivet Jews in their unbelief. They have no right, indeed to intrench themselves in prejudice against the Lord Jesus, on account of our disorders: he is no more accountable for them, than the God of Israel was for the disorders of their forefathers. But though it be wrong in them, it is more so in those who furnish them with occasion of offence. There is a woe upon the world, because of offences, seeing they stumble and fall over them; but there is a heavier woe on them through whom they come.

He that *winneth* souls is wise. I hope all the measures that are taken for the conversion of the Jews, will be of a winning nature.

If they be malignant and abusive, they must not be opposed by the same weapons. The servants of the Lord must not strive, as for mastery; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. Whatever is done, for children or adults, I trust it will be in an open, candid way, like that of our Saviour, who did good to the bodies of men, as a mean of attracting their attention, and conciliating their affection to the word everlasting life.

SERMON XI.

[Delivered on a Lord's-Day Evening, in a Country Village.]

PSALM iv. 4.

Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.

You are assembled together, my dear hearers, that you may learn something concerning your everlasting welfare. I am glad to meet you; and shall be happy to communicate any thing that I understand on this important subject. I pray God to bless it for your good! You have heard many sermons preached, and yet perhaps, have been but little profited; and you may hear many more to as little purpose. Religion consists not merely in hearing sermons; nor in going away, and talking how you like or dislike the preacher. Religion is not found among noise and clamour and dispute. It does not consist in either applauding or censuring men. If ever you hear to any purpose, it will make you forget the preacher, and think only of yourselves. You will be like a smitten deer, which, unable to keep pace with the herd, retires to the thicket, and bleeds alone. This is the effect that I long to

see produced in you. It is for the purpose of impressing this upon your minds that I have read the above passage, and wish to discourse to you upon it. In doing this, all I shall attempt will be to *explain* and *enforce* the admonition. Let us attempt.

I. TO EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF IT. The persons admonished in this psalm were men who set themselves against David, and persecuted him without a cause: accusing him, perhaps to king Saul: and what greatly aggravates their guilt, they are said to have *turned his glory into shame*; that is, they reproached him on account of his religion, which was his highest honour. There are such scoffers in the world now: and as these wicked men opposed David, so they oppose our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh. And by how much Christ is superior to David, by so much greater is the wickedness of those who mock at his gospel and people, than the other. They were, many of them, men of property; *their corn and their wine*, it seems *increased;* and it is likely that some of them were people in high life, who had access even to the king. But all this would not screen them from the displeaure of God. Even kings and judges themselves must submit to the Son, or perish from the way.

And, if riches will not profit in the day of wrath, neither will poverty. It is true, the scriptures wear a favourable aspect towards the poor. Jesus preached the gospel to them; and God is often represented as threatening and punishing those that oppress them; but, if a man be wicked as well as poor, (as it is well known great numbers are,) his poverty will excite no pity; he must bear his iniquity.

Presumptuous and thoughtless sinners are admonished to *stand in awe, and sin not, to commune with their own hearts upon their bed, and be still.* Bold as any of you may be in sin, there is one above you, who will call you to an account: pause, therefore, and think what you are about. To commune with our hearts, means much the same as to ponder the matter over with ourselves. It is said of the adulteress, that *lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.* She leads on her thoughtless admirers from one degree of sin to another, in quick succession; just as a person who should wish to lose you

in a wood, and there murder you, would lead you on, under some fair pretence, from path to path, through one winding direction after another, never suffering you to stand still and pause, lest you should turn back and effect your escape. Thus it is with sinners: they are hurried on, by delusion, from sin to sin, from company to company, and from one course of evil to another, while the enemy of their souls is doing every thing in his power to secure his dominion over them.

That which the adulteress most dreaded, was *thought*, close and serious thought : and this it is which the enemy of your souls most dreads. It is by pondering the path of life, if at all, that you must escape the snare. If sinners are saved, it is *from their sins*. Their souls must be converted to the love of Christ ; and the ordinary way that God takes to convert them is, by convincing them of sin, which is never effected but by their being brought to close and serious thought. It was by *thinking of his ways*, that David *turned his feet to God's testimonies*.

The *place* and *time* particularly recommended for this exercise is, *upon your bed, at night*. If there be any time more favourable to reflection than others, it must be that in which you are free from all intruding company, and interruptions from without. Then when you have retired from the world, and the world from you ; when the hurry of business is withdrawn ; when the tumult of the soul subsides, and is succeeded by a solemn stillness ; when the darkness which surrounds you prevents the interference of sensible objects, and invites the mental eye to look inward ; then commune with your own heart ; take a reckoning with your soul ; inquire what course you are in, and whither it will lead you !

It might be well to examine the *actions* of your life : but as the heart is the spring-head of action, the state of your *heart* must be the chief object of your inquiry. As to actions, they are neither good nor evil, but as they are the expressions of the heart. Were you to kill a fellow creature, you know there would be no evil in it provided it was by mere accident, and not from any malicious design, criminal passion, or careless neglect : and if you did ever so much good to your neighbour, yet if it were by accident and not from design there would be no goodness in it. It is the

disposition of our hearts that denominates our character in the sight of God. In all your communings, therefore, commune with your *hearts*.

Perhaps you will say, 'I find great difficulty in collecting my thoughts, and fixing them upon those things which are of the greatest importance: when I would think, I scarcely know what to think about.' Well; give me leave, then, to suggest a few plain questions, which I would earnestly recommend you to put home to your own soul.

First. *Does my heart choose and follow after those things which my conscience tells me are right?* I can assure you, many do not. Their consciences tell them, that they ought to fear God, to keep holy the Sabbath-day, to read and hear the word of God, and to perform various other duties; but their hearts are at variance with all these things. Their consciences tell them, that they ought not to swear, lie, steal, get intoxicated, cheat their creditors, and ruin their families; but their hearts, nevertheless, are set upon these, and many other such wicked courses; and they will pursue them at all events. Is this the case with any of you? It is a miserable life, to have the heart and conscience at variance. You are sensible it is so; and, therefore, if any of you are of this description, you labour, I dare say, to lull conscience asleep, that you may enjoy the desires of your heart, without interruption from its remonstrances. But this is a desperate way of going on. Conscience will not always sleep; and when it does awake, which perhaps may be upon a death-bed, its voice will be more terrible than thunder, and its accusations more painful than the sting of a scorpion. Did you never see a wicked man upon a dying bed? Perhaps not: possibly you cannot bear such sights, and therefore shun them. There are persons, however, who have; and, witnessing his agony, have longed to alleviate it. The guilt, the fear, and the horror, which have appeared in his eyes; the bitter regret that has preyed upon his dying heart; and the forebodings of everlasting misery that seemed to have seized his soul, have wrung their hearts with anguish: but all they could do was to drop an unavailing tear. Given up to the hardness of his heart, even the doctrine of salvation by the blood of the Lamb has had no effect

upon him, and he has died in all the misery of despair. O that this may not be your end! Yet, if such be your life, and you persist in it, there is no reason to expect but that it will.

But it is possible that you may not sustain this character. Your heart and conscience may not be at such variance as to give you any considerable pain. If so, let me recommend a second question: *Is my conscience instructed and formed by the word of God?* Though you may be certain that you are in a wrong course if you live in the violation of conscience, yet you cannot always conclude that you are in a right one when you do not violate it, because conscience itself may err. Saul was conscientious in persecuting the followers of Christ; yet he was one of *the chief of sinners* for so doing. You may ask, 'What can a man do, but follow that which he thinks to be right?' True; but it becomes him to compare his thoughts with the word of God: for we are easily persuaded to think favourably of that conduct which suits our inclinations; and, where this is the case, the error of the conscience, instead of excusing the evil conduct, becomes itself an evil.

The consciences of many people tell them, that, if they take care of their families, pay every man his due, and attend public worship once or twice a week, this is all that can reasonably be expected at their hands. And I have heard this Scripture passage brought in proof of it, *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* But, (to say nothing of the love of mercy towards our fellow-creatures,) to walk humbly with God is a very different thing from the above exercises.

A man's conscience may be easy, and he may persuade himself that he is in the way to life, while, in fact, he is as far from it as the old Pharisees, against whom the heaviest woes of damnation were denounced. The case of such people seems to be worse, on some accounts, than the openly profane: these, acting in opposition to their own consciences, as well as to God, a faithful warning sometimes takes hold of their fears; but those, deluded by vain hope, consider all such warnings as inapplicable to them. Both are steering the same course; but the one is impeded by wind and tide, while the other is aided by the current of a perverted

conscience. Do not forget to inquire, Is my conscience instructed and formed by the word of God? Perhaps you have not been in the habit of reading that sacred book, or of having it read to you. The neglect of it may occasion your eternal overthrow.

But let me recommend a third question: *Have any, or all my pursuits, whether after natural or sinful enjoyments, ever yet afforded me satisfaction?* The answer to this question is of importance; because, if they never have, there is no reason to conclude they ever will: and, if so, what have you been pursuing all this time? You have spent thirty, forty, fifty, or more years in the world, and, by a thousand different methods, have been seeking satisfaction; yet you have not found it. You thought, when you was young, to have found it in forbidden pleasures, and, perhaps, you gave a loose to appetite and desire; but you was disappointed. Guilt, infamy, and misery, were the fruits of those excesses. Your own heart will tell you this, if you ask it. Since that time, having felt the effects of your former folly, it may be you have turned your attention to other things: you have settled; and now your object has been to raise yourself in the world. Saving money has seemed the one thing needful to render you happy Perhaps you have saved a little of this article; and are you happy? Ask your own heart, and it will tell you. No, you want to save *a little more.* Poor man! you are unhappy; and unhappy in this course you will be. Can you tell the reason? You have been trying to satisfy yourself with *that which is not bread.* Do you not know that God has created you with desires which it is not in the power of the whole creation to satisfy? Alexander and Cæsar, those mighty monarchs, who each in his day conquered the world, were as far off from happiness as you are. The one is said to have wept because there was not another world to conquer; and the other, to have exclaimed, when in the full possession of empire, "Is this all?"

If you inquire, wherefore has God planted desires in your natures that it is not in the power of creation to satisfy. I answer, that you might be led to seek satisfaction where it is to be found. There is much meaning, and merciful meaning too, in those divine expostulations: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,*

and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto ME, *and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto* ME: *hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Again: *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto* ME *and drink!* And again: *Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel the to buy of* ME *gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

A fourth question I would recommend is this: *will the course I am in do to die with?* If it will, pursue it with all your might: but, first be well satisfied that it will. There is no way of answering this question but by comparing your character with the word of God. There you find our Lord declaring to his disciples; *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And again, *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Do you understand these things by experience? Did you ever seriously think about them? They are subjects of no little importance. Some men, and even some preachers, may tell you, that all this signifies nothing more than your being baptized, or, at most, living a sober, regular life; but it is at your peril to believe them, against the solemn declarations of Christ. Nicodemus, a master in Israel, was ignorant of these things. Other teachers now may be the same; and, if blind themselves, no wonder that they lead others, equally blind, till both fall into the ditch. But, as you value your souls, remember who it is that has said, *Ye must be born again.*

If you have never experienced this change, you are, at present, strangers to yourselves, to God, to Christ, nod to the way of life;

exposed to the curse of almighty God ; and, dying in your present state, must perish forever.

One question more let me recommend, and I will conclude this part of the subject : *If I should die in an unconverted state, and perish forever, can I endure the wrath of an offended God?* If you can ; why, then, let every man help his neighbour, and every one say to his brother, Be of good courage ; laugh at death ; set judgment at defiance ; and make a jest of an hereafter . . . . . but if not, pause and think. . . . .

Who can forbear remarking the cowardice of wicked men ; how, even in this world, these bold spirits are cut down with a little affliction. Those who trifle most with hell, and whose lips are so full of damnation, that it becomes, in their mouths, a mere matter of bravado, how do they sink under the first touch of God's indignation. Gaal and his company could eat and drink, and curse Abimelech at a distance ; but when Abimelech draws near, lo! they are covered with dismay.

Oh profane character! Can thine hands be strong, and thine heart endure in the day that he shall deal with thee? If you cannot tell how to endure the sufferings of life, what will you do in the hour of death ? How, especially, will you grapple with the bitter pains of eternal death ? *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses ? and if, in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?* Such, or nearly such, my hearers, will be your own reflections, if, upon your bed, you commune with your own hearts to any good purpose.

But I proceed,

II. TO ENFORCE THE SUBJECT, BY CONSIDERING THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A SERIOUS COMPLIANCE WITH IT. There is nothing more dreaded, by unconverted sinners, than solitary reflection ; and therefore, nothing more necessary. They are like a person whose affairs are going to ruin, and who feels a strong reluctance to enter into a thorough examination of his accounts. And wherefore ? Because such an examination would destroy his present peace, and he would be under the necessity of making a full stop. To avoid this, he puts far from him the evil day, and cherishes a

vain hope that things are not so bad as they appear. But, as in this case the longer a thorough examination is deferred, the deeper he sinks; so it is in the other. Let me request your attention to a few observations on this part of the subject.

1. There are things that you have *doubted*, or acted as if you doubted, which, if you would but retire and converse with your own heart, you would find it to be true. You have acted, but in too many instances, as though you doubted whether you were accountable and immortal creatures; and as though an agreeable subsistence in the present world were the only thing that should concern you. But, if you be not accountable to him that made you, how is it that sin, which is unknown to every creature but yourself, should, nevertheless, be accompanied with remorse? Is there not a tribunal erected within your own bosom, that forebodes a judgment to come. If there were no hereafter, why that dread of death, and that fearful looking-for of judgment, in the hour of threatening affliction? Oh sinner! you shall not be able to plead ignorance at the bar of heaven: your own heart, depraved as it is, will bear witness against you.

2. There are things to which you are apt to *object*, in God's dealings with you, which, were you to commune with your own hearts, would be found to be unobjectionable. If you are told of the strictness of God's holy law, and that nothing short of *truth in the inward parts* can answer to its requirements, you think it hard, and feel disposed to complain of the grievousness of his yoke: but ask your own hearts, would *you* be contented with any thing less from a fellow-creature?

Perhaps you are a parent, or a master; and what if your children or servants were, through fear, ever so assiduous; if you knew they had no love for you, would you be satisfied? Or, perhaps, you are a husband. If the partner of your life were alienated from you, and attached to another, though, through fear of your displeasure, she were studious to the utmost to oblige you in her outward deportment, would this satisfy you? Would you not disdain to accept of her services, unless you could have her heart with them? You must know that this is the truth. Out of your own mouth, therefore, will the Lord judge you.

Again: If you are told of God's awful threatenings against sin, your spirits rises against him, and you are ready to accuse him of cruelty: but ask your own heart, if you would spare one that had treated you as you have treated him? If you had a son, and, with all the tenderness of a father, nursed him, fed him, clothed him, and instructed him; and if, when he arrived at years of maturity, instead of behaving towards you with filial obedience and gratitude, he should prove undutiful, malignant, false, and do all he could to ruin you and your family, would you not give him up to his evil courses, and let him take the consequences of his behaviour? Or should you, from paternal pity, be disposed to pass over his transgressions; and should a common friend, with your approbation, intercede on his behalf, entreating him to beg your pardon, assuring him of your readiness to forgive the past; if, in addition to his former crimes, he continued to despise the overtures of mercy, what would you do with him? Or should he, when overwhelmed with troubles of his own procuring, affect to be sorry for what he had done, and write to you in the strain of humble confession, praying you to deliver him this once, and vowing how different his conduct should be towards you in future; if, as soon as his troubles had subsided, he were to return again to his former courses; what would you do with him? Alas, all this, and a thousand times more, have you done against the best of Fathers, the God in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways! *Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?*

3. One reason of your *knowing so little of your heart-sins* is, your communing so little with your hearts. You go on in a hurry of business, and the state and temper of your heart is overlooked; and, being naturally disposed to flatter yourself, you imagine it to be much better than it is. You may be governed by the love of this world, yea, and be very covetous; so much so, that all who know you may perceive it; and yet you do not perceive it yourself, but are ready to be offended with any person who tells you of it. You think yourself as good as your neighbours, and flatter yourself that your sin is not so very great. 'It is true,' say you, 'I have my failings, as all men have, but, thank God, I never was guilty of

such things as many are.' So said the Pharisee in the parable, *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men:* and so said the wicked priests, in the days of Malachi, *What have we spoken* SO MUCH *against thee?* O my hearers, commune with your hearts, and you will find them to be very different from your present thoughts of them.

There is one thing in particular, which, perhaps, never struck attention, your *total want of love to God.* This is the sin of your nature, and the fruitful parent of all other sins. God requires the whole heart; as, indeed, he justly may, for he is worthy of it; but you have no heart to give him. It is preoccupied, and that with such things as are contrary to God. All your actual sins are but little, compared with this. They have been committed only at different times; but this is a tide, deep and large, that flows without cessation or interruption. Those are the fruits; but this is the poisonous root from which they spring. If you loved God, you could not love the world, and the things of the world, as you do. You could not blaspheme his name, neglect his worship, or trample on his laws; and all with unconcern. Neither could you feel towards your neighbour as you do in many instances. All bitterness, and wrath, and malice, and evil speaking; all envy towards them that are above you, and pride, oppression, and unfeeling treatment, towards them that are beneath you; all arise from a want of the love of God; for he that loveth God, will love his brother also.

All unconverted sinners, I believe, retain a good opinion of their hearts, however they may differ in expressing it: which is evidently owing to their ignorance of its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness. Some make no secret of it. 'It is true,' say they, 'I now and then swear, when in a passion, and get too much liquor once in a while; but I *mean* no evil; my *heart* is good.' Others who have been brought up under evangelical preaching, are ashamed of this language, and would despise the ignorance of the person who should use it. They will not deny in words that their kearts are bad; howbeit they mean not so. By *heart* they understand, they know not what, something distinct from *intention disposition*, or *desire* Therefore they are sometimes heard to say, 'It is true, I am not

converted ; but I *desire* to be, so. I cannot say, I love Christ ; but I *wish* I did.' This is the same thing as saying, ' My heart is good. If I be not a converted man, it is not my fault. I am willing at any time, if God would but convert me.' But all this is false and delusive. If you were willing to return to God, by Jesus Christ, there is nothing in heaven or earth that stands in your way. The truth is, you love your sins too well to part with them for Christ or heaven ; and have no desires after conversion *for its own sake*, but merely as a something, which, at times, you think you could *submit* to, rather than suffer eternal damnation. Whoever neglects to commune with his own heart, it is necessary for *you*, that you may know your true character ; of which, with all your advantages, you are hitherto totally ignorant.

Even in the concerns of men with men, there is much blindness to their own motives, and deception in forming a judgment of their own conduct ; which is owing to a want of looking into themselves. A thousand things are defended by persons, in company, which, were they to retire alone, and commune with their own hearts, they would be obliged to condemn. In how many instances have contentions been cherished, and half a neighbourhood either brought in as witnesses, or in some way implicated in the contest, which might all have been decided in a quarter of an hour, if the party had only retired alone, and asked himself this question : Have I done to my neighbour what I should have wished him, in like circumstances, to have done to me ?

4. There are things on account of which you may *value yourselves*, and of which you may *make a righteousness*, that, if you were to retire alone, would be found of a very opposite nature. It is possible, you may have been in the habit of reading a chapter in the Bible, once a week, or oftener, in your family ; of frequenting public worship ; of giving away something to people who are poorer than yourself ; and of shunning public houses and riotous assemblies. It is possible, likewise, that you may consider this as the way to heaven, and, from hence, lay your account with being happy in the world to come. But, if you look into your heart, you may find that the motives which have influenced you have been such as God can never approve ; and, if so, instead of justifying,

they will serve only to condemn you. If you have read the scriptures, or gone to a place of worship, merely from custom, and not from any love you had to these things; if you have relieved the poor out of pride, rather than pure compassion; and if that which has preserved you from the grossest vices has been rather a regard to your interest, health, or character, than any concern for the honour of God; can such things be acceptable in his sight?

But, if your motives were ever so pure, and your good deeds ever so many; yet, having broken the holy, just, and good law of God, you cannot be justified by any thing which you can do. If you commune with your heart to any good purpose, you will never think of being saved by the works of your own hands; but feel the necessity of a Saviour, and of a great one. The doctrine of salvation by the death of Jesus will be glad tidings to your soul. Finally: you will, as you are exhorted in the verse following the text, *offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.* In other words, with a broken and contrite spirit, you will approach the God against whom you have sinned; mourn over your unprovoked offences, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born: and this, without thinking of either your prayers or tears as being any thing, or of any account; but, placing all your hope and help in him, who, *when we were without strength, in due time died for the ungodly.* To him be glory for ever! Amen.

SERMON XII.

PSALM xiii. 2.

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?

WE have, in a former discourse, considered the importance of looking into our own hearts; but that counsel is not applicable in all cases. There is such a thing as to pore on our guilt and wretchedness, to the overlooking of our highest mercies. Though it be proper to know our own hearts, for the purpose of conviction, yet, if we expect consolation from this quarter, we shall find ourselves sadly disappointed.

Such, for a time, appears to have been the case of David. He seems to have been in great distress; and, as is common in such cases, his thoughts turned inward, casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of things. While thus exercised, he had *sorrow in his heart daily:* but, betaking himself to God for relief, he succeeded; *trusting in his mercy, his heart rejoiced in his salvation.*

There are many persons, who, when in trouble, imitate David in the former part of this experience: I wish we may imitate him in the latter. In discoursing on the subject, I shall first notice the disconsolate situation of the Psalmist, with the remedy to which he repaired under it; and then inquire, to what cases it is applicable among us, and whether the same remedy be not equally adapted to our relief, as to his.

I. Let us notice THE DISCONSOLATE SITUATION OF THE PSALMIST, WITH THE REMEDY TO WHICH HE REPAIRED UNDER IT. The psalm is probably one of those mournful songs which he composed during his persecution by Saul: but, like most others, though it begins with complaint, it ends in triumph. We may be certain he was pressed with great *difficulties*: for we do not take counsel with ourselves or others, but in such cases. The particulars of his situation may be collected from the different parts of the psalm.

1. *He was sorely persecuted.* This was a mysterious providence. God had anointed him to the throne, and brought him into public life; it might have been expected, therefore, that he would have made his way plain before him: yet, in following what must, to him, manifestly appear the leadings of his Divine Guide, he brings upon himself a flood of evils. Though nothing was further from his intention than to use any means to dethrone his sovereign; yet Saul is jealous, and his dependants are stirred up, by envy and malice, to compass the ruin of the innocent. Let not those who are candidates for an immortal crown be surprised, if their path to glory be covered with snares and pits: it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.

2. *The Lord seemed to prosper his persecutors, and not him:* his enemy was *exalted over him.* This seems more mysterious still. Is the God of Israel, then, a man that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent? Does he use lightness? Or the things which he purposes, does he purpose according to the flesh; that with him there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? Far be it from him. Yet, if we were to judge by appearances, we might, at times, be tempted to draw such conclusions.

3. *His most intimate acquaintance seem to have forsaken him.* In cases of difficulty we usually advise with our friends, if we have any. If we are driven *to take counsel with ourselves*, therefore, it may be presumed that we are bereft of that consolation. A sympathizing, wise, and faithful friend, in a time of difficulty, is a great blessing. In times of prosperity, many will profess a regard to us; but, if persecution for Christ's sake should overtake us, we may expect some to stand aloof, who now court our acquaintance. This has been the lot of men of whom the world was not worthy; and it was no small part of their affliction, that they had to suffer *by themselves*. Let us not complain of such things, however. Our Lord himself was forsaken by lover and friend. He took three of his most beloved disciples to accompany him in the hour of his sufferings; but they fell asleep, and left him to agonize alone.

4. *To these temporal distresses were added others of a spiritual nature*: the Lord *hid his face from him;* and, to him, it appeared, as though he had *forgotten him.* If, under his outward troubles, he could have enjoyed inward peace; if he could have poured out his heart with freedom in secret; if, though banished from the sanctuary, yet, looking towards that house, and calling upon the Lord, he had heard him from heaven his dwelling-place, his load had been supportable: but to have to say, with Job, *Behold: I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him!* This gives a double weight to the affliction. But, here also, we have no reason to complain. David has been before us; and what is more, David's Lord. Jesus was persecuted; his enemies were exalted over him; his friends were scattered from him; and, to fill up the bitter cup, his God forsook him. This was the sorrow of sorrows. He speaks as one that could have borne any thing else: *My God, my God, ... why hast* THOU *forsaken me?*

5. *All this was not for a few days only; but for a long time.* HOW LONG *wilt thou forget me?* HOW LONG *wilt thou hide thy face from me?* HOW LONG *shall I take counsel in my soul?* The intenseness of the affliction renders it trying to our fortitude; but

it is by the continuance of it that patience is put to the test. It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the first case, the soul collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above ; but, in the last, the mind relaxes, and sinks into despondency. When Job was accosted with evil tidings, in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude : but, when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.

These were some of the particulars which made up the load of David ; and under which he is said to have *taken counsel in his soul.* The phrase seems to be expressive of great restlessness of spirit, a pouring over his misery, a casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of these things. Perhaps, if we had been secreted near him, we should have seen him walking by himself, now looking upwards, then downwards, weeping as he went, or sighing under a load that would not suffer him to weep ; sometimes sinking into torpid silence, and sometimes interrogating himself on his future conduct : 'What shall I do ? Which way shall I take ? Shall I go backward, or forward ; or shall I stand still ? Shall I try any other means ; or shall I despair ?'

From this tumult of the mind, we are certain he obtained relief ; for, towards the close of the psalm, he deals in the language of triumph : *I will sing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with me.* Nor are we left to guess in what manner his soul was delivered from this state of dejection : *I have trusted,* says he, *in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.* From hence, we may gather, that the way in which he obtained relief, was by CEASING TO TAKE COUNSEL IN HIS SOUL, AND BY LOOKING OUT OF HIMSELF, AND TRUSTING IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

This remedy was competent to the removal of all his complaints. What is it that mercy, divine mercy, mercy through a Mediator, mercy connected with omnipotence and veracity, cannot effect ? Was he *persecuted ?* By trusting in this, he would cease to fear what man could do unto him. Was the hand of *Providence* apparently against him ? That might be, and yet all, in the end, work together for good. Did his *friends* forsake him ?

The compassion of his best Friend would more than make up this loss. But did *he* also hide his face from him ? Still he could do no better than apply to the mercy-seat, and supplicate his return. Finally, Was all this complicated load of trials of *long continuance* ? After waiting patiently for the Lord, he would hear him, would bring him out of the horrible pit, set his feet upon a rock, establish his goings, and put a new song into his mouth. Such, indeed, was the issue of his present trials, which is recorded for the encouragement of others, who shall be in like circumstances.

II. Let us inquire, TO WHAT CASES THE SUBJECT IS APPLICABLE AMOMG US ; AND, WHETHER THE SAME REMEDY BE NOT EQUALLY ADAPTED TO OUR RELIEF, AS TO THAT OF DAVID ? The Holy Spirit has drawn the likeness of man in all situations, that we might find our case, and learn instruction. If we barely read them as a description of the concerns of persons who lived a long time ago, and make no application of it to ourselves, we shall miss the great end for which the scriptures were given us. The case of the Psalmist appears, to me, to be applicable to three descriptions of people.

1. *To persons who sink into despondency under the adverse providences of God.* God has poured a portion of sorrow into the cup of human life. Property, connexions, friends, children, and every other avenue of natural enjoyment, become, at one time or other, inlets to grief : and if, in these seasons of adversity, the attention be turned inward, rather than directed to the Father of mercies, we shall be in danger of sinking under them.

We have seen men who, under the smiles of providence, have been cheerful and amiable, when disappointments and losses have overtaken them, sink into sullen dejection, and never more lift up their head. In some instances, it has issued in suicide. It is a dangerous thing to take counsel in our souls, to the neglect of the counsel of God.

We have seen others, wretched beyond expression, owing to unhappy connexions. In the formation of them, religion has been overlooked, and even genuine affection, for the sake of advantages of a worldly nature. The consequence has been, on the one side, neglect, dislike, strife, cruelty, and infidelity ; on the other disappointment, jealousy, unavailing reflection, a broken

spirit, a fixed melancholy, and every thing but absolute despair. Oh, with what desire could I draw off the attention of such broken hearts from things below to things above; from taking counsel in their souls, to trusting in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus! Many a wounded spirit has, by this means, been healed, and rendered happy for life; besides being prevented from plunging, in the agony of desperation, into the gulf of eternal ruin.

We have seen even religious characters inordinately depressed with troubles. The loss of some darling object, the confounding of some favourite scheme, or the rising of some apparently insurmountable difficulty, has overwhelmed the heart. In such circumstances, the mind is apt to nurse its melancholy, trying to live, as it were, on dying elements: but it is not thus that we shall either glorify God, or gain relief. Jesus hath said, *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* From troubles of some kind there is no exemption; in the present state: but it does not become the followers of Christ to indulge in *heart*-troubles for little things; and such are all our worldly sorrows; *light* afflictions which are but for a moment. The true Christian life is, to be inordinately *careful for nothing; but is every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God.* It is thus that *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* It is by ceasing to take counsel, in our souls, and trusting in God's mercy, that our sorrow, like that of David, will be turned into joy and triumph. Our way may be covered with darkness, so much so, that we cannot see where the next step will place us: but we have a Leader, who sees through all, and who has promised to *guide us with his eye.* Things may so work, as to confound our calculations: but, if all work together for good, this is sufficient. What are our afflictions, too, in comparison of the glory that awaits us? Paul had his afflictions, as well as we, far greater indeed than ours have been; and he also *took counsel* under them; but not *with himself:* he took into his account the hope that was set before him: *I reckon* says he, *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be re-*

vealed in us. It is while we thus look *not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, that our afflictions* appear *light* and *momentary*, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

2. The case of the Psalmist is applicable to *persons who, at the outset of their religious concern, are encompassed with darkness and long continued dejection.* There are some, who are no sooner brought to entertain a just sense of the nature and demerits of sin, than they are led to embrace the gospel-way of salvation, and find rest to their souls: but it is not so with all. Some are known to continue, for a long time, in a state of dark suspense. They have too deep a sense of sin to be able to enjoy the pleasures of this world; and are too much in the dark concerning its forgiveness, to be able to imbibe the joys of another. Hence, their days are spent in solitude and dejection: they search for peace, but it is far from them: they *take counsel in their soul, and have sorrow in their heart daily.*

Various things contribute to promote this state of mind. In some, it may be owing to circumstances *without* them. Perhaps, like David, they had no friend to whom they could open their minds; or if they had, it might have been to persons who were either total strangers to these things, or who were unskilful in the word of righteousness. Such also may have been the kind of preaching they have heard, that nothing suitable to their case has been ordinarily, if ever, delivered. If the preacher be of such a description as to content himself with moral harangues; if, instead of exhibiting the Saviour of sinners, he have nothing to say to a wounded spirit, unless it be to advise him to forsake his vices, and be better; or if his object be rather to improve the manners of men, and render them decent members of society, than to renew their hearts; the tendency of his preaching will be, either to establish the hearer in pharisaical presumption or sink him into despondency.

Or, should the preacher be of another description; should he hold forth a kind of Mahometan predestination; be averse from the free invitations of the gospel to sinners, as sinners; and employ himself in persuading his hearers that no one has any warrant to come to Jesus for eternal life, but the regenerate; the effects will

be much the same. The awakened sinner will either take up with some enthusiastic impression, imagine himself a favourite of heaven, *trusting that he is righteous, and despising others;* or, having no consciousness that he is regenerate, be deterred from approaching the Saviour, and so sink into despondency.

Could I gain access to such a character, I would proclaim in his ear the MERCY *of God to sinners;* the all-sufficiency and willingness of Jesus to save all that are willing to be saved by him; and the free invitations of the gospel; as a sufficient warrant for him, or any other sinner, to trust his immortal interests in his hands. O ye that labour and are heavy laden, come to Jesus, *and ye shall find rest unto your souls!* Do not dream of first ascertaining your election, or regeneration, and of approaching the Saviour as a favourite of heaven; it is only by believing in him, as a perishing sinner, that you can obtain an evidence of these things. It is by the gospel coming to us, not in word only, but in power, that our election of God is known, and our regeneration ascertained.

In others, such dejection may be owing to something *within* them. It may arise from a kind of propensity to think on things which are against them, rather than on those which are in their favour; viewing only the dark side of the cloud; dwelling on the magnitude of their guilt, their unworthiness of mercy, and the little success they have had in praying and striving to enter in. This propensity is often fed by an idea that it would be presumption, in such sinners as they are, to admit the consolation of the gospel; and that it is abundantly more becoming them to stand aloof, in darkness and misery. But this is not Christian humility. It is a spurious kind of modesty, the principle of which is nearly akin to that voluntary humility and self-denial, that induces men to abstain from that which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving. Notwithstanding the modest and humble appearance which these objections assume, they will be found to be no better than a *species of self-righteous pride*, opposed to the humiliating gospel of Christ. When you object, for instance, that you are *unworthy* of such great and unspeakable blessings as the gospel reveals, and, therefore, that it would be presumption in you to accept of them; what is this but saying, that, before you can have any warrant to receive

these blessings, you must be *worthy* of them, at least somewhat more so than you are at present? And, probably, you hope, in time, to become so. But this is the very essence of self-righteousness, and directly opposite to the gospel of Christ. Christ came into the world to seek and save them that are *lost*. He came into the world to save *sinners*, even the chief of sinners. He has no mercy to bestow on sinners, but as undeserving. If any man think himself deserving of his grace, his answer is, *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* The very meaning of the word *grace*, of which the scriptures speak so largely, is FREE FAVOUR TO THE UNWORTHY: unworthiness, therefore, can be no ground of objection. If there be any bar in your way; it is your conceit of some kind of worthiness being necessary to recommend you to the grace of the Saviour: and take heed lest you perish under this delusion, after the example of apostate Israel, who *followed after the law of righteousness, but never attained it: and wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.*

If such should not be the end of things with you, yet, to say the least, so long as this self-righteous spirit possesses you, you will be a miserable creature, and never be able to find rest unto your soul: and it certainly behoves you to take heed, lest this should not be the worst. The question is not, whether the blessings of pardon justification, and eternal life, be too great for our deserts: Are they beyond our wants? Can we do with less? If they are not too great for our necessities, nor too great for the ever-blessed God, through the mediation of his Son, to bestow, who are we, that we, should hesitate to accept of them? If he present to us the cup of salvation, shall we not drink it? True humility, instead of making objections, would answer, *Be it unto thy servant according to thy word.*

We are assured, by him that cannot lie, that if we *inquire for the good old way*, the way in which all the faithful have gone from age to age, *and walk in it, we shall find rest unto our souls.* We know, also, who it was that applied the walking in this *good old way* to faith in his name, obedience to his authority, and conformity to his example; saying, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy*

laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and by burden is light. From hence, we may certainly conclude, that, if we do not find rest unto our souls, it must be owing to our not coming to him as a saviour, or not yielding to his authority as a king, or not learning to copy after his example: and, if we comply not with the first, in vain do we flatter ourselves with conformity to the last. We shall never *work the works of God*, till we *believe in him whom he hath sent*.

A willingness to be saved and ruled and modelled according to the mind of Christ, is, generally, the last thing of which sinners are apt to suspect themselves. They think they are willing, and even desirous, to be saved in his way, and to become his people; and that the only question is, whether Christ be willing to save them: whereas all such thoughts are founded in error. We are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels. If we can so believe in him, as to relinquish every false system of religion, and every false ground of hope, falling into the arms of free *mercy*, as the chief of sinners; and if we can so yield ourselves up to him, as to be willing to have our ear bored, as it were, to the door-posts of his house, and to serve him for ever, there is no obstruction, in heaven or in earth, to our salvation.

O disconsolate and desponding sinner! Thou hast been reading, thinking, hearing, praying, striving; and yet thou art never the nearer: no peace, no rest to thy soul, nor ascendency over thy sins. Like the beast in the mire, all thy striving serves but to sink thee deeper. Let me ask thee a few questions: Understandest thou what thou readest? The disciples were as dark and as sorrowful as thou art, till they *understood the scriptures*. Do thy thoughts accord with God's thoughts, as they are revealed in the scriptures? God's thoughts are as much above those of man, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Let me entreat thee particularly to consider, whether thy prayers have been offered up *in the name of Jesus*, or with an eye to his mediation? Perhaps, hitherto, thou hast *asked nothing in his name: ask, and thou shalt receive*.

that thy joy may be full. Remember this, too, it is he himself who invites thee to do so. *The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit:* follow his example. Here, in the gospel of free grace, in exchange for thy horrible situation, is *rock* for thy feet, and a *new song* for thy mouth. It is vain for thee to think of overcoming thy sins, any more than of obtaining forgiveness, in any other way. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Cease, then, from taking counsel in thy soul, trust in the mercy of God through a mediator, and thy heart shall rejoice in his salvation.

3. The case of the Psalmist is applicable to *persons who, during the greater part of their religious profession, live under habitual fear, lest they should not, at last, prove real Christians.* This description of professing Christians, of which there is a considerable number among us, seems to have been scarcely known in the primitive ages. In those times, they appear to have been generally conscious of being what they professed to be—believers in the Son of God; and, knowing that such had the promise of eternal life, they did not ordinarily doubt upon the subject. It was possible, however, at that time as well as this, for the mind to be in doubt of its own sincerity. They had hypocrites and self-deceivers, as well as we; hence, in describing the graces of the Spirit, the sacred writer speaks of *faith unfeigned*, and of *love without dissimulation.* And, as the denouncing of a hypocrite among the apostles caused each one to enquire, *Lord, is it I?* so, doubtless, the most upright character would be subject to occasional fears, lest he should be found deceiving his own soul. This seems to be the kind of *fear* which the Apostle describes as cast out by *perfect love:* and, as the love of the primitive Christians greatly abounded, their fears and doubts with regard to their own sincerity were, consequently, but few.

One great cause, I apprehend, of the prevalence of such fears, in sincere people of the present age, is, the great degree in which the attention is turned inward, and the small degree in which it is directed to the things of God as revealed in the scriptures, or, to use the language of the text, *the taking counsel in their souls.*

I do not mean to discourage all remembrance of past experiences. The members of the church of Sardis are admonished to remember *how they had received and heard;* and David, under great dejection of mind, resolved to *remember the Lord from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar.* Much less do I mean to countenance the notions of such writers and preachers, who cry down all evidences of grace; all marks and signs of internal Christianity, taken from the work of sanctification in the soul. Far be this from me. I am persuaded, that for any man to reject evidences of personal religion drawn from this quarter, he must fall very little short of rejecting his Bible.* But, though sanctification be the evidence of an interest in spiritual blessings, yet it is not so much by remembering our past religious experience that we shall obtain satisfaction, as by renewed exercises of grace. The Apostle, in the forecited passages, when describing the means by which we are to come at the knowledge of our personal religion, makes no mention of things past, but of things present, of which the mind is supposed to be conscious at the time. *Hereby*, saith he, *we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.—Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.—We know that we have passed from death unto life,* not because WE HAVE LOVED, but *because we* LOVE *the brethren.* And, if satisfaction be attainable only by the renewed, exercises of grace, our object is to ascertain the method best adapted to promote such exercises, which, I am persuaded, will be found to be, a looking out of ourselves to the truths and consolations revealed in the scriptures.

To attempt to ascertain the reality of our religion by a remembrance of past experiences of grace, is attempting what, in most cases, must needs be, to say the least, extremely difficult, and, if accomplished, would be of no use. The mind is not formed for such a remembrance of its own ideas and sensations as this would require. It is true, those impressions which are singularly striking will often be remembered at a distant period; but not in that clear and lively manner in which they are felt at the time. It is

* See especially 1 John ii. 3, 5. iii. 14. 18—21. 24.

only a *general* recollection of things that is ordinarily retained : to be employed, therefore, in raking over our past feelings, in order to discover whether we be real Christians, is almost a hopeless undertaking. If it were otherwise, and we could clearly gain the object of our research, still it has no tendency to glorify God The way to glorify him is to *bring forth much fruit ;* and not merely to remember that we did bring forth fruit, some twenty or thirty years ago. Those examples which the scriptures afford, of persons recurring to past experiences, were not for the purpose of ascertaining their own sincerity, but for the regaining of those sensations which, at former periods, they had possessed. The reasons why the churches of Ephesus and Sardis were admonished to remember their first love was, that they might recover it ; and the object of David, in his recollection of past times, was not so much that he might determine what were the nature of his experiences, at those times, as that he might regain his confidence in God. *I will remember thee*, saith he, *from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar.* God was the object he sought ; and the remembrance of what he had formerly experienced of his goodness and faithfulness, was the *means* he used to find him. Allowing, therefore, that the remembrance of past sensations may afford us satisfaction as to the reality of our personal religion, yet it is no otherwise than as *reviving* those sensations, by which they become renewed exercises of grace. If we can recollect those things which, at a former period, endeared the Lord Jesus Christ and his religion to us, and so recover our affection towards them, such a recollection will be profitable, and will serve to strengthen our evidences of interest in them. But, if we think of gaining satisfaction on this subject by a mere remembrance of past affections, without any consciousness of present ones, we shall be disappointed ; or, which is worse, if we imagine that we have gained our object, it will prove, in the end, that *a deceived heart hath turned us aside.*

If we would wish to discover, whether there are any particles of steel in a large quantity of rubbish, it would not be the wisest way to search for them, and especially in the dark, but to hold a large and efficacious magnet over it. And this, if it be there, is

the way to discover true religion in our souls. The truths and promises of God are, to a principle of religion in the mind, that which the magnet is to the steel: if there be any in us, the proper exhibition of the gospel will ordinarily draw it forth.

If it be a matter of doubt with you, whether you be truly converted, far be it from me to endeavour to persuade you that you are so. Your doubts may be well-founded, for ought I can tell: and, supposing they should be so, the door of mercy is still open. If you have obtained mercy, the same way is open for your obtaining it again: and if not, there is no reason why you should not obtain it now. The consolations I have to recommend, are addressed to you, not as converted, nor as unconverted; not as elect, nor as non-elect; but as *sinners:* and this character, I suppose, you have no doubt of sustaining. All the blessings of the gospel are freely presented for acceptance to sinners. Sinners, whatever may have been their character, have a complete warrant to receive them; yea, it is their duty to do so, and their great sin if they do not. Nothing but ignorance, unbelief, self-righteous pride, or some such evil state of mind, prevents it. The gospel-supper is provided; all things are ready; and the king's servants are commissioned to persuade, and, as it were, compel them to come in. If you accept this invitation, all are yours. I ask not, whether you be willing to be saved in God's way, in order to determine your right to accept; (the message sent you in the gospel determines this;) but in order to ascertain your interes in spiritual blessings. If you cordially believe the gospel, you have the promise of eternal life. If its blessings suit your desires, they are all your own. If, for example, it does not offend you, but accords with your very heart, to sue for mercy as the chief of sinners; if you be willing to occupy that place which the gospel assigns you, which is *the dust;* and to ascribe to Jesus that which God has assigned to him, *power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;* if you can unreluctantly give up all claim to life, on the footing of your own worthiness, and desire nothing so much as to be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness; if the salvation you seek be a deliverance from the dominion of sin, as well as from its damning

power; finally, if the heaven you desire be that which the scriptures reveal, a state of pure and holy enjoyment, there can be no just cause to doubt of your interest in these things. To imagine that you believe all that God has revealed concerning his Son, and that *with all your heart, receiving the love of the truth that you may be saved;* and yet that something else is wanting to denominate you believers, is to imagine that believing is not believing.

Read the holy scriptures, pray to the Fountain of light for understanding, attend the preaching of the word; and all this, not with the immediate view of determining what you are, but what Christ is: and if you find in him that in which your whole soul acquiesces, this, without your searching after it, will determine the question as to your personal interest in him.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH; EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

SERMON XIII.

MATT. XV. 21—28.

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me! But he answered and said, It is not meat to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table, Then Jesus answered and said unto her O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

WHEN John the Baptist sent a message to Jesus, saying, *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another!* Jesus gave an indirect answer, an answer containing a reproof. Whether John himself, retaining, like the apostles, the notion of a temporal kingdom, and therefore expecting, on his being put in prison, that a great revolution would follow in favour of the Messiah, and hearing of nothing but companies of poor people repairing to him

to be healed of their infirmities, began to hesitate whether he might not have been mistaken; or whether he only personated some of his disciples; somebody appears to have been stumbled at the simplicity of Christ's appearance. Hence, the indirect answer of Jesus: *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them—And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* To be encompassed by crowds of afflicted people supplicating for mercy, and employed in relieving them, was sustaining a character, though far from what the world calls splendid, yet truly great, and worthy of the Messiah. The short account of this poor woman is more profitable to be read than a long and minute history of military exploits.

In endeavouring to improve this brief story, we will notice, Who the petitioner was; what was her errand, and the repeated applications which were made, with the repeated repulses, but ultimate success, that she met met with.

I. Let us observe, WHO THE PETITIONER WAS. She is said to be *a woman of Canaan.* Mark says, she was *a Greek;* but the term, in this and some other connexions, seems to denote only that she was a Gentile, and not that she came from the country called Greece; for in the same passage she is said to have been *a Syrophenician by nation.*

She was a Gentile; one of the first fruits of that harvest of Gentiles that was shortly to be gathered in. Our Lord, though he was sent, as he said, *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,* yet extended his mercy to individuals of other nations: and it is worthy of notice, that those few who were gathered at this early period, are highly commended for the eminence of their faith. Like the first fruits of the earth they were the best. It might still be said on a review of things among us, that such faith as that of the woman of Canaan and the Roman centurion, is rarely to be found in Israel.

Farther: She was not only a Gentile, but one of those Gentiles who were under a *peculiar curse.* She appears to have been one of the descendants of the ancient Canaanites; many of whom, when

driven from their own country, settled on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. We know the curse to which that people were devoted, even from the days of their ancestor Canaan, the Son of Ham. We know also that Joshua was commanded not to spare them, and that Israel was forbidden to make leagues with them. This curse, however came upon them for their being an exceedinly wicked people. The abominations of which they were guilty, and which were nursed by their idolatry as by a parent sin, are given as the reason why the land vomited out its inhabitants, and why Israel must form no alliances with them, lest they should learn their ways. There was no time in which the God of Israel refused even a Canaanite, who repented, and embraced his word. Of this, Rahab the harlot, Uriah the Hittite, Ornan the Jebusite, and others were examples. The door of mercy has ever been open to faith: and though it seemed, in this instance, to be shut, it was only to prove the party, and to induce her to plead with greater importunity.

II. Let us notice HER ERRAND. It was not her own case, but a case which she had made her own; that of her young daughter. She pleaded it, however, as if it were her own—*Have mercy on* ME!—*Lord help* ME! From this part of the subject we may learn,

1. *That in our approaches to Christ, it becomes us to go not for ourselves only, but for others around us, and to make their cases ours.* He to whom the application was made, could not but approve of this principle; for it was that on which he himself was acting at the time. He took the cause of perishing sinners, and made it his own. *He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows.* A spirit of sympathy is the very spirit of Christ, which they that are joined to him must needs possess.

2. *That it behoves us more, especially, to carry the cases of our children to the Lord, and to make them our own.* It may be, they are too young to understand or feel their own malady, or to know where help is to be had; in this case, surely it is our proper business to personate them before the Lord: or, it may be, their minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, so as to have no desire to pray for themselves; and then we

can do no less than carry their case to him, who alone is able to help. What less, and in many instances, what more can an afflicted parent do for an ungodly child? It is true, we have no ground to except the salvation of our children, while they continue hardened; but Jesus is exalted to *give repentance and remission of sins;* and, while we present our supplication in a way of submission to his will, he will not be offended with us. It was the practice of holy Job to offer sacrifices for his children; and it seems to be a part of God's plan. frequently to bless the children at the intercession of the parent, and thus to express his approbation of something which they have done for him. *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus*, said *Paul, for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.*

III. Let us remark THE REPEATED APPLICATIONS, THE REPEATED REPULSES, AND THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS WHICH CROWNED THE WHOLE. Here were no less than four applications; three of which were made by the woman herself, and one by the disciples, on her behalf. Three out of the four failed; but the fourth succeeded. Let us examine them, and the success they met with, distinctly.

The *first* was made by the woman, and is described as follows: —*She cried unto him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* We might remark the brevity, the fullness, and the earnestness of this petition; but there is one thing, which our Lord himself afterwards noticed, and which, therefore, is particularly deserving of our attention: it *was the prayer of faith.* She *believed*, and confessed him to be the Messiah. Her addressing him under the character of *Lord*, and as *the son of David*, amounted to this. It was a principle universally acknowledged among the Jews, that the Lord, or king Messiah, should be of the seed of David. To address him, therefore, under this character, was confessing him to be the Christ. This was the appellation under which he was more than once invoked by certain blind men; and, in every instance, the same idea was meant to be conveyed. These poor people did not address our Saviour in a way of unmeaning com-

plaisance: they understood that the Messiah, *the son of David*, was to be distinguished by the exercise of *mercy:* hence, they continually associated these ideas, HAVE MERCY on me, O Lord, thou SON OF DAVID!—*Jesus*, *thou* SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY *on us!* And this is the very character given to the Messiah in the Old Testament, especially in the Seventy-second Psalm. *He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.* Thus they had heard, thus they believed, and thus their faith wrought in a way of effectual prayer.

But whence had this woman, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenant of promise, this wisdom? Providence had placed her on the borders of the Holy Land, and she appears to have profited by it. The true religion, contained in the oracles of God, had its influence not only on Israel, but on many individuals in the neighbouring nations. It was foretold, that they who dwelt *under his shadow* should return; and here we see it accomplished. Probably this poor Canaanite had often gone into the Jewish synagogue, to hear the reading of the law and the prophets; and, while many of those who read them gained only a superficial acquaintance with them, she understood them to purpose. One would almost think she must lately have heard the Seventy-second Psalm read, at one of these assemblies, and have made up her petition out of the passage forecited. *He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;*—then why not me? I will go, and turn this prophecy into a prayer; *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David!* It is good to have our residence near to the means of grace, and to have a heart to make use of them. It is good to grow upon the banks of this river of the water of life. It is pleasant, also, to think of the good effects of the true religion among the posterity of Abraham. It is thus we see the fulfilment of the promise to that faithful man, *I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.*

But, while these things afford pleasure to us, they must, methinks, have been very provoking to the Jews; and happy had it been for them, if they had been provoked to a godly jealousy. Many among them were far behind these strangers in knowledge and in faith, though they enjoyed very superior advantages. The

Saviour was continually among them, crying, and calling at their gates, and at the entering in of their cities; yet they generally disregarded him: whereas, in this case, he only took an occasional journey, and that in secret; (for when he entered into an house, *he would have no man know it;*) yet here this poor woman found him out, and presented her supplication. How true is that saying of our Lord, *The last shall be first, and the first last;* and how often do we still see persons of inferior advantages enter into the kingdom of God before others who have possessed the greatest abundance of means.

But what treatment did she receive from our Saviour, on this her first application? *He answered her not a word.* Who would have expected this? Does it accord with his usual conduct? In what instance had he been known to refuse such an application? It was very mysterious, and very discouraging. Is his ear heavy, then, that it cannot hear? or his arm shortened, that it cannot save? *Answered her not a word!* Who could understand this as any other than a repulse? If the faith of the petitioner had been weak, she might have concluded that he would not answer her, because he could not help her. If her heart had been cold, she might have gone away, as many do after having *said* their prayers, contented without the blessing. If her spirit had been haughty, she must and would have resented it, and have asked no more. In short, had she been any thing but what she was, great in faith, in love, and in humility, she would have turned away. And here we may see the wisdom of our Saviour's conduct: had he immediately granted her request, we had seen little or nothing of the exercise of these graces. But let us proceed.

Here is a *second* application made on her behalf; and this is by the disciples: they *came and besought him to send her away.* I hope they meant that he would grant her petition. One might have expected something considerable from the intercession of the twelve apostles. He had consented to go and heal the centurion's servant, at the request of the Jewish elders: and surely his own disciples must have an interest with him, equal to theirs. If the poor woman knew of their becoming her advocates, it is natural to suppose her expectations must have been raised: and this it is

likely she did; for, while they were speaking, she seems to have held her peace. Neither need they have been at a loss for a precedent; for though she was a heathen, yet they had lately witnessed his kind attention to a Roman centurion: and, had they pleaded this, he might have shown mercy at their request. But to what does their intercession amount? Alas, it is mean and pitiful: it does not appear to have a spice of benevolence in it, but to have been merely the effect of self-love: *Send her away*, said they, *for she crieth after us.* O disciples! And does the voice of prayer trouble you? How little at present do you resemble your Master! We never read of *his* being troubled with the cry of the poor and needy. And this is all you have to urge, is it? Your charity amounts to just so much as that of some wealthy persons, who give a poor man a penny, not out of compassion, but in order to get rid of him!

What is the answer to this miserable petition? Our Lord takes no notice of the mercenary nature of the plea; and this was like *himself:* amidst the numerous faults of his disciples, he often exercised a dignified forbearance towards them. But what answer did he make? *I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* It was true, that his commission was especially directed to Israel; and, previously to his resurrection, he even forbad his disciples to go *in the way of the Gentiles:* nor is it any wonder, that he should avail himself of this general truth, still to withhold his favour, rather than grant it at such a request as this. The motive which they had urged was not likely to work upon him.

But think how it must affect the poor petitioner. Silence was discouraging; but this must have been more so. That might be imputed to other causes: she might suppose he was considering of her request; and, though he had said nothing in her favour, yet he had said nothing against her: this, however, is not only giving her a denial, but giving the *reason* of it; which would seem to render it irrevocable. To an eye of sense, it would now seem to be a lost case. It is not so, however, to an eye of faith.

Let us proceed to the *third* application. The disciples had been poor advocates. Make way for her, and let her plead her own cause: she can do it best. It is not one, nor two repulses, that

will silence the prayer of faith; nor will aught else, so long as Jesus lives, and the invitations and promises of his word continue unrevoked. It was written, *He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper:* and the efficacy of this declaration must be tried again. *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me!*

Observe, she prefaces her petition with an *act of worship*. She had before acknowledged him as David's son, now she approaches him as his Lord. Prostrate at his feet, she adores him, and renews her supplication. It is short, yet very full. It has only three words, but more than three ideas, and these full of importance. She here, in effect, tells him, that her case is urgent; that she is truly helpless; that no help is to be expected from any other quarter; that she is persuaded of his being able to save to the uttermost, and that it belongs to his character, as Messiah, to help those that have no helper. Though a Canaanite, assuredly she possesses the spirit of an Israelite: *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

If there be such a thing as holy violence, or taking the kingdom of heaven, as it were, by force, surely this is it; and, knowing the character of Christ, we should have concluded that this petition *must* be successful. But *Jesus answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* What imperfect judges are we of times and seasons. Just now, we should have supposed her cause was gained, and yet it was not so; and now we should have been ready enough to conclude it was lost, and yet it is not so. Let us learn to wait patiently for the Lord, and neither conclude, when we enjoy great fervour and freedom in our approaches to him, that our prayers must be answered immediately, or not at all; nor, when thrown back into darkness and discouragement, that now there is no hope. Had this poor woman rested her expectation on her own feelings, or on any thing short of the Lord's own word, she had fainted in this trying moment. What a crowd of thoughts might she, at this time, have cherished; hard thoughts, proud thoughts, and despairing thoughts. 'And is this the Messiah, of whom such glorious things are spoken? Is this the compassion that he is to exercise *to the poor, and to them*

that have no helper? No mercy, no help for a stranger, even though prostrate at his feet; and, as if it were not enough to refuse his assistance, he must call me a dog! I will ask no more: whatever be my lot, I will bear it!' Such might have been her reflections, and such her conduct; but she was a believer, and faith operates in a different way.

Yet what could our Saviour mean by such language? Did he really intend to countenance that contemptuous spirit with which the carnal Jews treated the Gentiles? Surely not. Did he feel towards this poor stranger, as his words would seem to indicate? No: his roughness, like that of Joseph towards his brethren, was assumed for the purpose of trying her; and she endures the trial with singular perseverance. She neither resents being called a dog, nor despairs on account of it; but is resolved still to follow up her suit. Yet what new plea can she find to offer?

Let us hear the *fourth* and last application: *Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table.* Most admirable! Such an instance of spiritual ingenuity, of holy and humble acumen, was perhaps never known before, nor since Now the conflict is at an end; the victory is gained; the kingdom of heaven is taken by the prayer of faith. Jesus, like Joseph, can refrain himself no longer, but appears in his true character: *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt!* Let us review this charming crisis, and mark the ground from which this last and successful plea proceeded. IT WAS THE GROUND ON WHICH THE LORD HAD PLACED HER. He intimated that she was a dog, unworthy of the children's bread. She readily admitted it, and, as a dog, presented her petition. Here, then, is the grand secret how to succeed in our approaches for mercy. We must stand upon that ground where the scripture places us, and from thence present our petition. Does the Lord tell us, in his word, that we are guilty, unworthy, ungodly, deserving of eternal death? On this ground we must take our stand, and plead for that mercy which is provided for characters of this description. All applications for mercy, on any other ground, will be unsuccessful.

The last answer of Jesus, as well as the last prayer of the woman, is worthy of special notice. There are three things remarkable in it; the commendation of her faith, the granting of her desire, and the affectionate manner in which both were addressed to her.

Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith! This accords with his general practice. The blessings of healing, as well as those of a more spiritual nature, were ordinarily suspended on believing, and, when obtained, were ascribed to it. Hence, such language as this: *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.—Thy faith hath saved thee.—Thy faith hath made thee whole.* Did our Lord, by this language, mean to give away the honour of salvation from himself? No: it is not used for the purpose of transferring honour to us, but for giving encouragement to faith. Neither is there any opposition of interests between Christ and faith: those who are saved by faith are saved by Christ; for it is of the nature of faith to go out of itself, and draw all from him. Christ's power and grace operate as the cause of our salvation; faith, as the mean of it; yet, being a mean absolutely necessary for *the bringing of Christ and the soul together*, as well as for the promotion of all other graces, it is constantly held up as the one thing needful.

Perhaps, if we had comemnded the Canaanitish woman, we should have admired her great importunity, and great humility; but our Lord passes over these, taking notice only of her faith: and wherefore? Because faith was the root, or principle, from whence the others sprang, and by which they were kept alive.

Our Lord often commended the faith of believers; but I recollect only *two instances in which he speaks of it as being great;* and they are both of them Gentiles: one is the Roman centurion; and the other, the woman of whom we are discoursing. There, doubtless, was an eminency, or peculiar strength, in the faith of each of them; but that which, more than any thing, rendered it great in our Lord's account was, the *disadvantages* under which it was exercised. To Israel pertained the *promises*. If Gentiles partook of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, it was by being grafted into it, *contrary to nature*. Yet, amidst these disadvanta-

ges, they abounded in faith, which, for the degree of it, was not to be found in Israel. Thus we are often provoked to jealously. persons whose religious advantages have been small, compared with ours, are, nevertheless, before us in faith, and love, and heavenly-mindedness. Thus it is, that the pride of man is stained, and no flesh suffered to glory in the divine presence.

Having commended her faith, our Saviour proceeds to *grant her desire* :—*Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* The Lord does not excite a willing mind, with a view finally to cross it ; or an earnestness of desire, in order to disappoint it : such willingness and such desire, therefore, are indicative of his designs. Christ only can satisfy the desires of the mind ; and Christians are the only men in the world whose desires are satisfied. Cæsar, in the full possession of empire, is said to have exclaimed, " Is this all ?" And such is the disappointment that every sinner will meet with, who sets his heart on any thing but Christ. It is not in the power of the whole creation to say to an immortal, guilty creature, *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt ;* but Jesus hath the words of eternal life.

The *tender and affectionate manner* in which our Saviour commended the faith, and fulfilled the desire of the poor petitioner, is deserving also of remark. It is introduced with an interjection, *O woman!* In the lips of a speaker abounding in affectation, such words signify but little : but Jesus never affected to feel, when he did not. Whenever, therefore, an interjection is seen in his speeches, we may be certain he felt. He felt *compassion* towards her, on account of her affliction ; but chiefly *admiration* and *delight*, on witnessing the peculiar energy of her faith. Thus he *marvelled* at the Roman centurion. The genuine, and especially the eminent exercises of grace, are, more than any thing, the delight of Christ's heart. In looking at the poor and contrite spirit, he overlooks heaven and earth.

It may be rather surprising to us, that our Saviour should hold this poor woman so long in suspense ; but, if he had not, her graces would not have been so apparent, and the exercise of them so grateful to him. And thus we may account for many of the afflictions through which the Lord brings his servants. If tribula-

tion work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and if, in his esteem, the exercise of these graces be of greater account than our present ease, it is not surprising that he should prefer the former to the latter: and this consideration should reconcile us to those providences which, for a time, hold us in painful suspense.

From the whole, we may remark, that *genuine*, yea, *great grace, may be exercised in respect of temporal mercies.* It was not for the salvation of her soul, or the soul of her daughter, that this poor woman was so importunate; but for the removal of an affliction. Yet, such was the grace which was exercised in it, that there is no doubt of her being eternally saved. The exercise of spirituality is not confined to the seeking of spiritual blessings. We may serve the Lord in our daily avocations, and it is essential to true religion, that we do so. Such prayer may be offered, and such faith exercised, in respect of our daily bread, as have the promise of everlasting life.

Finally: If our Saviour suffered himself to be overcome by one who sought for a temporal blessing, *much more will he accept of those who come to him for such as are spiritual and eternal.* His promises are much stronger in the one case, than in the other. Though there were several general intimations, that the Messiah would exercise compassion towards the bodies, as well as the souls of men; and the numerous miracles which he wrought afforded full proof of his readiness to do good in every way; yet he nowhere bound himself, that I recollect, to heal *all* that came to him. I believe he never sent away an individual without a cure: but still, he seems to have reserved to himself a kind of discretionary power to do so. But in matters of everlasting moment, the word is gone out of his lips. *Him that cometh unto me, I will* IN NO WISE *cast out.* Here, every one that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, we are assured by the keeper of the gate, that it shall be opened. If any man, therefore, be hereafter shut out of the kingdom of heaven, it will appear in the end, that he sought not after it in the present life; or, at least, that he sought it not by faith.

We shall all be importunate, sooner or later: but importunity will one day be unavailing! Many will then seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Yea, they will cry earnestly, saying, *Lord, Lord, open unto us.—We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say,—Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* O my hearers! let us agonize to enter in at the straight gate. All the zeal and earnestness which we may feel in other things, is spending our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not. Incline your ear, and come unto Him; hear, and your souls shall live; and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

THE FUTURE PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH CONTRASTED WITH ITS PRESENT IMPERFECTIONS.

SERMON XIV.

EPHESIANS v. 25—27.

Christ—loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.

IT is a distinguishing feature in the apostolic writings, that motives to the most ordinary duties are derived from the doctrine of the cross. Who but an apostle would have thought of enforcing affection in a husband to a wife, from the love of Christ to his church? We are, undoubtedly, hereby taught to act, in the common affairs of life, from Christian principle; and I am inclined to think, that our personal Christianity is more manifested in this way than in any other. It is not by a holiness put on, on religious occasions, as we put on our Lord's-day dress, that we shall prove ourselves to be Christians; but by that which is habitual, and which, without our so much as designing it, will spontaneously appear in our language and behaviour. If the Apostle's heart had not been full of Christ, he would have thought of other motives than this: but this, being uppermost, presented itself on all occasions. We

may be thankful that it was so on this, especially: for we are hereby furnished with a most interesting and affecting view of the salvation of sinners; a salvation originating in the love of Christ, and terminating in their being presented to him, without spot, and blameless.

Three things require our attention: namely, the character of the church, when the designs of mercy shall be fulfilled upon her; the causes to which it is ascribed; and the honour for which it is intended to prepare her.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH, WHEN THE DESIGNS OF MERCY SHALL BE FULFILLED UPON HER: *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish.* We are at no loss to perceive the meaning of the term *church*, in this connexion. It manifestly expresses the whole assembly of the saved, elsewhere called *the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.* It is denominated *glorious*, through the glory which Christ shall have put upon it; and which, it is intimated, will consist in a freedom from every imperfection, and the consummation of purity, or holy beauty.

In the description here given, the Apostle has, no doubt, an eye to the church in its different states, as *fallen*, as *renewed*, and as *perfected.* In the first, it is supposed to have been defiled, so as to need *sanctifying and cleansing;* and, even in the second, to have many things which diminish its beauty; such as *spots and wrinkles*: but, in the last, it shall be *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;* or speaking more literally, *holy, and without blemish.*

Our ideas of a state of perfection are very defective. An Apostle acknowledged, *We know not what we shall be.* Indeed, it is, at present, but very partially revealed; and, if it were otherwise, our minds, naturally weak, and greatly enfeebled by the remains of indwelling sin, would be unable to sustain a direct view of it. We can better conceive what it is *not*, than what it is. The Apostle himself writes as if he could not fully conceive of the immaculate state of the church: but he could say what it would *not* be, or, that it would be *without* those spots and wrinkles which at present attended it, and greatly impaired its beauty. As this, then,

was the Apostle's manner of contemplating the future glory of the church, let it be ours.

I shall not attempt to compare the church perfected, with what it was antecedently to its being sanctified and cleansed, in virtue of Christ's having given himself for it; (for, in that view, it admits of no comparison;) but with what it is at present, notwithstanding; that is, the subject of many imperfections.

Spots suppose a loveliness of character upon the whole, though, in themselves, they are unlovely. They could not with propriety, have been attributed to the church, while she remained unsanctified; for then she was altogether polluted. The same may be said of *imperfections*. It is improper to attribute them to unconverted sinners. Such characters will often acknowledge themselves to have their imperfections; but, in truth, they thereby pay themselves a compliment which does not belong to them. Imperfection supposes the mind to be engaged in the pursuit of perfection, though it has not, as yet, attained it. Spots and imperfections, then, are properly attributed to the church in its present state; indicating a general loveliness of character, though they are in themselves unlovely. Whatever has tended to deface it, or to detract from its holy beauty, that is to be reckoned among its spots.

How much, then, in the first place, has the beauty of Christ's church been defaced by *false doctrines*, and by the strifes and divisions which have followed upon them. While we are of the Apostle's mind, determined to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, we shall not be in danger of deviating very widely from the truth, in any of its branches: but, if we lose sight of this polestar, we shall soon fall upon the rocks of error. Paul, and his fellow-apostles, inspired as they were, could not maintain the purity of all the churches. The number of worldly men who obtrude themselves upon the church, some in the character of members, and others in that of ministers, together with the tendency to err, which is found even in believers themselves, too easily accounts for the same things in that and every succeeding age. When the gospel was addressed to the Jews, many of them believed; but, among their leaders there were men whose minds were not

subdued to the obedience of Christ. 'Christianity,' said they, 'is very good, so far as it goes; but it is *defective*. It grates with our feelings, who have been used to so much religious pomp. Circumcision, and a few of our decent ceremonies, would complete it.' So also, when the gospel was addressed to the learned Greeks, some of them believed; but among them were men who wanted to supply some of its supposed defects. 'Christianity,' said they, 'is good, so far as it goes; but it wants a little philosophy to be added to it, and the whole to be cast into a philosophical mould; and then it will be respectable, and worthy of being the religion of the whole human race.'

But what said the Apostle, to the churches, in respect of these proposals? Hear him: *As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any may spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the* FULNESS *of the Godhead bodily. And ye are* COMPLETE *in him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are* CIRCUMCISED *with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the hand writing of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and, took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* LET NO MAN THEREFORE JUDGE YOU *in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days: which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ.* LET NO MAN BEGUILE YOU OF YOUR REWARD, *in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nour-*

ishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Had the church of Christ adhered to this counsel, it had been free from many spots which have since defaced it: but it has not. In every age, there have been men of corrupt minds, who have followed the example of these *Judaizing* and *philosophizing* teachers, in their attempts to render the doctrine of Christ more *complete*, that is, more congenial to the wishes of their own hearts: and the church has, in too many instances, been carried away by them. Some have degraded the dignity of Christ, and thereby undermined his sacrifice; others have disowned the freeness of his grace; and others have turned it into licentiousness. Behold, how, at this day, the beauty of the church is marred by these anti-christian principles, and the strifes which ensue upon them. One denomination, or society, sees the spots upon the face of another, and is employed in exposing them, instead of removing those upon its own; while the impartial eye must perceive, that deviations from the simplicity of the gospel are, in different degrees, to be found in all.

Blessed be God, who hath given us to expect a day when the church shall be freed from all this deformity; when the watchmen shall see eye to eye; when the people of God, now divided into parties, shall be of one heart and of one soul; when neither discordance nor defect shall attend their researches; and when we shall all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!

How much also has the beauty of Christ's church been defaced by *superstitious* and *unscriptural worship*. The method of *completing* Christianity, by the addition of a number of decent ceremonies, first practised by the Judaizing teachers, has been acted over and over again. The introduction of such things in the first three centuries made way for the grand Papal apostasy; and spots of this kind remain upon the faces of many Protestant communities to this day. The nearer we approach to the simplicity of primitive worship, the better. The meretricious ornaments of man's invention may adorn the mother of harlots, but they are blem-

ishes to the bride of Christ. They are the *wood*, *hay*, and *stubble* of the building, which later builders have laid upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and which, when the day shall come, that shall declare every man's work, of what sort it is, will be burnt up.

Finally: The beauty of Christ's church has been greatly defaced by the *impure lives* of great numbers of its members. I do not not now refer to the immoral practices of all that have been called Christians; as a large proportion of them cannot be said to have deserved the name. I refer to those only who have either been Christians indeed, or, at least, received and treated as such by those who were so. The evils which have prevailed among them have been great, and still furnish matter of shame and grief in all the churches. The primitive churches themselves, some more especially, had many spots of this description. And it is worthy of notice, that those who most departed from the doctrine of Christ, such as the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, were most faulty in matters of practice. The evil communications of some of their teachers tended to corrupt good manners. The same causes continue also to produce the same effects. Those congregations where the pure doctrine of the cross is relinquished, whether it be in favour of what is called morality, on the one hand, or high notions of orthodoxy, on the other, are commonly distinguished by the laxity of their conduct. Many of the former, by a conformity to the genteel vices of the world, have nearly lost all pretensions to Christianity; and many of the latter, by their opposition to practical preaching, and neglect of Christian discipline, have been offensive to common decency. Nor is this all: even the purest communities have their spots. Individuals are chargeable with things, for which the good ways of God are evil spoken of; and they that have been enabled to maintain a fair character in the eyes of men, have, nevertheless, much alienation of heart; and many faults to acknowledge and bewail before God.

We are given, however, to believe, that it will not be thus always. The church will not only see better days, before the end of time, but, ere she is presented to her Lord, shall be entirely purified: *The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall*

gather out of his kingdom all THINGS *which offend, and* THEM *which do iniquity*: THEN SHALL THE RIGHTEOUS SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN IN THE KINGDOM OF THEIR FATHER.

Another term, by which the present imperfections of the church are expressed, is that of *wrinkles*. These, as well as spots, are inconsistent with perfect beauty. They are signs of the decay of life, and health, and vigour: hence, they are the ordinary symptoms of old age, or of an enfeebled constitution. Surely, a more appropriate term could not have been chosen for expressing those *spiritual declensions to which the church, in its present state, is continually subject*. The church at Ephesus, during her *first love*, resembled a virgin in the bloom of youthful beauty; but, when she left it, and, with it, her *first works*, she became as a woman bowed down by age, and covered with wrinkles. In this church, we see what the church in general is, compared with what it was in the primitive ages; what Protestants are, compared with what they were at the Reformation; what Protestant Dissenters are, compared with the Puritans and Nonconformists; and what many congregational churches are, compared with what they have been at certain periods. I need not enlarge on these particulars: your own reflections are sufficient to convince you, that great numbers of each description are in a wrinkled, or decayed state. There is indeed, in us, a strong and perpetual tendency to declension. Things which have formerly been interesting and impressive, will, if we do not habitually walk with God, lose their influence. We shall read of the zeal of the apostles, of the martyrs, and of other Christian worthies; but we shall not feel it. On the contrary, we shall seem to be reading of men whom we cannot but admire, but whom we know not how to imitate.

How cheering is the thought, that the time is coming, when these spots and wrinkles will be no more; but the church, and every individual member of of it, shall be *holy, and without blemish!*

Holy beauty, in every stage and degree of it, is lovely. The character given to that generation of the Israelites which grew up in the wilderness, and which, warned by the crimes and punishments of its predecessors, clave in great numbers to the Lord,

is charming: *Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.* It was then that Balaam endeavoured in vain to curse them; and that, instead of cursing, he was constrained to bless them Like an old debauchee, awed by the dignity of virtue, he was compelled to desist, and even to admire the object which he could not imitate: *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.—Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!* Such, I may say, was the youthful beauty of the Jewish church; and that of the Christian church was still greater. To read the Acts of the Apostles, and to see the faith, the love, the zeal, the disinterestedness, the diligence, and the patience of the first disciples, is very affecting. It was then that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; that great grace was upon them all; and that, having believed in Jesus, they rejoiced in being thought worthy to suffer for his name. But, lovely as both the Jewish and Christian churches were, neither of them could vie with the church made perfect. The disparity between the highest degrees of holiness and a state of sinless perfection, is inconceiveable. The deliverance of the captives from mere temporal thraldom, and which was only the *effect* of sin, was so overcoming, that they were *like those that dream*, scarcely beleiving themselves to be what and where they were: but for the church of God, in full remembrance of its foul revolts, to feel itself *holy, and without blemish*, is an idea too great for sinful creatures to comprehend.

If any imagine this language to be too strong, and that sinless perfection, or what is near to it, has been attained by many in the present life, I would recommend them to consider, that to be *holy, and without blemish*, is different, according to the different kinds, and degrees of light in which it is viewed. A vessel may be clean, if viewed in a dim light, and very foul, if viewed in a clear one. Thus a *character* may be *holy, and without blemish*, if viewed only

in the light of selfish partiality, or even by the partiality of friendship; nay, if he be a recluse, the prejudice of an enemy may not be able to detect his faults: but place him before the tribunal of *God*, set his secret sins in the light of *his* countenance, and the decision will be different. To be presented *holy, and without blemish*, is to be so *in* HIS *sight*. Such is the idea conveyed by the words of Jude: *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless* BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF HIS GLORY *with exceeding joy*. To be faultless in the presence of an earthly judge, especially of one distinguished by his penetration and impartiality, is no small matter: but to be so in the presence of HIM to whom all things are known, implies a change far surpassing every thing experienced among mortals.

The low ideas which some persons entertain of sinless perfection, may be owing, in part, to their considering it chiefly in a *negative* point of view. Feeling, it may be, very little positive desire after their evil courses, they begin to think they have not sinned for such a length of time, and, consequently, are now nearly, if not altogether, perfect. But perfection does not consist merely in a cessation from evil, (which is no more than may be ascribed to animals,) but in the love of God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and of our neighbours as ourselves. The state to which the church shall be brought, before she is presented to her Lord, is that of being not only *without blemish*, but HOLY, *and without blemish*.

In that perfect state, we shall be unreservedly *devoted to the Lord*. No more shall the mind be betrayed, by the illusive reasonings of men, to listen to God-dishonouring principles: no more shall it lose sight of Christ, in the maze of its own researches. The blandishments of the world shall no more seduce the heart; nor hope, nor fear, nor shame, divert the feet from the path of rectitude. No more shall slothfulness, or any kind of sinful indulgence, unnerve the soul in its labours for God. No more shall the flesh lust against the spirit, nor the spirit have to struggle with the flesh. No more shall our half-hearted services render it doubtful to ourselves or others, on whose side we are. In a word, *There the Lord's servants* SHALL SERVE HIM.

The multitude, in that perfect state, will also, *in respect of each other*, be of one heart, and of one soul. No discordant sentiments divide them; no unkindnesses grieve them; no bitter strifes interrupt their harmony; no slights, misunderstandings, misconstructions, hard thoughts, or cutting words, have place among them; no giving, or taking, offence; no opposition of interests; no selfishness; no envies, jealousies, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: all is sweet peace and love. Bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice are forever put away from among them. In him that loved and gave himself for them, all hearts are one.

This leads to consider,

II. THE CAUSES TO WHICH ALL THIS IS ASCRIBED: *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.* I think it not improbable, that the Apostle may allude to the parable, concerning the Jewish church, in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. The substance of it is this:—A female infant, the fruit, perhaps, of an illicit connexion, (whose wretched parent, in order to hide her shame, had left it in the fields,) was discovered by a humane prince, who happened to be passing that way at the time. He looked at the perishing babe, and pitied it. 'I will save thy life,' said he; 'and, as thou art fatherless and motherless, I will be both father and mother to thee, and thou shalt be mine.' He then washed, and clothed her; and taking her to his palace, gave her an education suited to his intentions, which, in fact, were, at a proper time, to marry her. On her arriving at years of maturity, he carried his design into execution; she became his wife, and the crown royal was placed upon her head.

Look at this representation, and at his conduct who *loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.* Look, I say, at both these representations, and judge, if the one has not some reference to the other.

There are three things to which the salvation of the church is here ascribed; namely, the *love* of Christ, the *sacrifice* of Christ, and the *word* of Christ.

1. For the accomplishment of so great a deliverance, it was necessary that Christ should LOVE *the church*. The thought of this is overwhelming. His wisdom and power and majesty may induce us to admire and adore him; but to think of his *loving* sinful men, excites amazement.

There are several properties pertaining to the love of Christ, which require to be taken into the account, if we would form any thing like a just view of it. Love may be founded upon *character*. Christ himself speaks of loving his disciples on this acconnt: *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* But that of which we are discoursing could not be founded upon any thing of this kind; for its object is supposed to be altogether polluted. He loved his church, and gave himself for it, not because it was sanctified and cleansed, or in view of its being so; but *that he* MIGHT *sanctify and cleanse it*. Again, Love towards an unworthy object is commonly, no other than *general benevolence*. Such was that compassion which our Saviour felt, when he wept over Jerusalem; and such that *good will towards men*, of which his being born into the world was an expression. God's giving his only begotten Son to be made a sacrifice, and declaring, that *whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life*, was a great expression of divine goodness towards sinners, whether they believe and be saved, or not. But the love which Christ is said to have borne to the church was *discriminating* and *effectual* to its salvation. The church is supposed to have been given him of the Father, to be unto him as a bride to a husband, and, ultimately, the reward of his undertaking. The love of Christ, therefore, in this connexion, can be no other than *electing* love; and the passage may be considered as parallel with that at the beginning of the Epistle, *He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.*

2. For the accomplishment of the church's redemption, it was necessary, that Christ should *give himself a sacrifice*. In this

way his love must operate, or be ineffectual. We are now, my brethren, upon the most interesting part of the most interesting subject that was ever presented to men or angels. It was this on which Paul wrote so feelingly: *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who* LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME. It was this that furnished John with his affecting doxology: *Unto him that* LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD,—*to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* It is this that furnishes the church in heaven with its *new song*: *Thou art worthy*—FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD, *out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*

But wherefore must our Redeemer give *himself* for us? Would nothing short of life suffice? Nothing. We, as transgressors, being justly exposed to eternal death, must have borne our iniquity, had he not offered himself as a substitute in our place, life for life. Some who profess to believe in the atonement, have hesitated, from I know not what kind of modesty, to maintain the *necessity* of it in order to forgiveness; alleging, that it does not become us to say what God could, or could not, have done. But does it become us, when he has, in effect, declared any thing to be inconsistent with his perfections, to question whether it might not nevertheless, be admissible? Why did not the cup pass from him, when with strong crying and tears to God, he besought, that, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, it might do so? It is true, it *pleased* the Lord to bruise him; but, surely, not without a necessity for it! If mercy could have been manifested consistently with justice, without his suffering, surely the cup would have passed from him! Whoever had been given up to be made a curse, God would have spared his own Son! But *it* BECAME *him for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* To give up the *necessity* of atonement is half giving up the thing itself: and the half which remains will have but little effect on our hearts, or on the tenor of our labours.

The connexion in which the death of Christ is here introduced, namely, as being *for his church*, or, which is the same thing, for his elect people, teaches us, that all which he did and suffered was

with a view to their salvation. The invitations of the gospel, it is true, are addressed to sinners, as sinners; and I believe it to be equally true, that such invitations are founded in the *sufficiency* of Christ's atonement for the pardon of all the sins of the whole world, were they to believe in him: but, if we will allow the scriptures to speak out on all occasions, and form our principles by them, taken as a whole, we must conclude, that it was his *intention, design*, or *purpose* to save those, and only those, by it, who were given to him of the Father. In other words, it never was his intention to impart faith, and other succeeding benefits, to any other than his elect: *Whom he did predestinate them he also called.* We are saved and called, *not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.*

I am aware, that many objections might here be raised; but I am also aware, that they all rest upon the principle, *that divine predestination and human agency cannot be consistent, unless they appear, to us, to be so.* This I do not believe. It did not belong to Moses to explain *how* the messages of peace to Pharaoh and Sihon were consistent with the purpose of God to destroy them: but I suppose he believed they were so, because the same Being (who could not do wrong) ordered the former, and declared the latter. Neither does it belong to me to show, *how*, with respect to the persons who shall be ultimately benefitted by the death of Christ, a limitation of design is consistent with universal invitations: but I believe it to be so, because he that has ordered the one has, in effect, declared the other. Vain men may ask, *Why then doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* But if, instead of *replying against God*, they were to throw themselves at the feet of sovereign mercy, and seek forgiveness in the name of Jesus, it would turn to a better account.

3. For the accomplishment of the church's salvation, it requires, that it should be sanctified and cleansed by faith in the *word* of God. The latter of these terms frequently denotes the removal of sin, as to its condemning, as well as its defiling influence. The blood of Christ operates in both ways; and the faith of him, in different respects, both justifies and sanctifies. As the process,

however, seems principally to refer to the *meetening* of the church by a gradual increase of holy beauty, the terms *sanctify* and *cleanse* may, in this place, convey much the same idea. It never was the Lord's design to save his people in their sins, but from them. Sanctification, therefore, is an essential branch of salvation. The word, especially the word of the gospel, truly believed, is the laver in which the sinner is washed from his uncleanness. He may have, heretofore, yielded a traditional assent to it, and remained a slave to his lusts, notwithstanding: but when, being convinced of sin by a view of the divine law, he receives it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, it worketh *effectually in him*. He may have made many attempts at cleansing himself, while under the power of unbelief; but every thing of this kind was ineffectual, and left him fouler in the sight of God than it found him. And well it might; for it was going as it were, to Abana and Pharpar, in contempt of the waters of Jordan. Till, therefore, the sinner, renewed in the spirit of his mind, is brought to relinquish all confidence, except in Christ, his attempts at holiness are but wearying himself with very vanity.

There is, it is observable, a marked *connexion*, in this, as well as in many other passages, between the sacrifice of Christ and the sanctification of his people. *He gave himself for the church*, THAT HE MIGHT *sanctify and cleanse it*. Had not Christ laid down his life, there had been no holiness among the fallen sons of Adam, no gospel-laver in which to wash, nor any such thing as sanctification of the Spirit; all had continued in their uncleanness. It had been as inconsistent with the perfections of God to have given his Holy Spirit to a sinner, as to have pardoned his sins, or bestowed upon him any other spiritual blessing. But, having sacrificed his life, and that under a promise, the effectual grace of God not only may be imparted consistently with justice, but the communication of it is rendered certain, inasmuch as it is a part of the promised reward. Hence, it is represented as the *fruit*, or *effect*, of his death. Believers are the *seed* which he was to see; the *travail* of his soul, which should yield him a satisfaction, like that of a mother who *remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*

It is on this principle, that our Lord, in view of the unbelief of the Jewish nation, thus speaks, in prophecy: *I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain,* YET SURELY MY JUDGMENT IS WITH JEHOVAH, AND MY WORK WITH MY GOD. As if he should say, 'Whether Israel be gathered, or not, I shall be rewarded. My work is before God, the judge of all, who will not suffer it to fall to the ground. If Israel be lost, their loss will be to themselves; it shall be more than made up to me, from among the Gentiles.'

To render manifest this *connexion*, it was ordered, in the divine counsels, that an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit should be poured out immediately after the sacrifice was offered: and, lest the cause of it should be overlooked, our Saviour expressly declared, that, if he went not away, the Comforter would not come; but that, if he went, he would send him; and that he should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This was the appointed time for great numbers of the Jews to be convinced of their unbelief, as well as for the Gentiles to be converted, and given to Christ, as the reward of his death. Things were thus connected in order of time, that they might appear to be connected in order of nature; or that one might appear to be, what it actually was, the effect of the other.

Add to this, The death of Christ is not only a procuring cause of sanctification, but, as a doctrine, it operates to the producing of it. Hence, the same effects are ascribed to the washing of water by the word, and to the blood of the Lamb. The atonement offered was that in *virtue* of which we are sanctified; and the atonement preached and believed is the *mean* of its accomplishment: *We are sanctified by the faith that is in him.*

I proceed to notice,

III. THE HONOUR FOR WHICH THIS GRACE TOWARDS THE CHURCH IS INTENDED TO PREPARE IT: *That he might present it to himself.* There is no doubt but the term here alludes to the presenting of an espoused virgin to her husband. Under this imagery, the scriptures are wont to represent the different joyful advances of the church towards perfection. As the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the heathen empire of Rome, are described

in language applicable to the last judgment, intimating that they would be, to the parties concerned, days of judgment in miniature; so the different advances of the church towards perfection are described in language applicable to a state of perfection itself. Thus the conversion of sinners is represented as an espousal of them to one husband, that they might be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. The conversion of the Gentiles to Christ is also thus described: *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.—The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.* Under the same imagery seem to be represented the great conversions to Christ in the latter day. Immediately after the fall of Babylon, the voice of a great multitude is heard in heaven, saying, *Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the* MARRIAGE *of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the* MARRIAGE-SUPPER *of the Lamb.—These are the true sayings of God.*

On each of these occasions, there is a partial presentation of the church to Christ; and all are preparatory to that universal and perfect one, which shall take place at the end of time.

But there seems to be something singular in the idea of Christ's *presenting the church to himself.* The office of presenting the bride, we should suppose, properly belongs to per parent. But how if she had no parent, and, like the orphan before described, was cast out, without an eye to pity, or a hand to help her? In this case, the bridegroom must himself be her father, and perform the office of a father throughout, even to the presenting of her to himself. If such be the allusion, it represents, in an affecting light, our forlorn condition as under the fall; and teaches us, that,

in every stage of our salvation, we must remember it, in order to heighten our love to Christ.

The perfection of bliss that will succeed to this presentation, is beyond all our present conceptions. Suffice it to say, that Christ will be the sum and substance of it. We have already noticed the glory of the church, as being freed from her spots and blemishes; but this, though a great blessing, is chiefly negative. Besides this, there is a positive source of enjoyment in an uninterrupted and endless communion with her Lord and Saviour. To be able to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ, and so to be filled with all the fulness of God, is the mark on which saints on earth are directed to keep their eye; but to attain it, is reserved for saints in heaven. Nor shall they so comprehend it, as to leave no room for continued researches: for how shall they perfectly know that which *passeth knowledge.*

Finally: It is observable, that, under the figure of being admitted to a marriage-feast, or excluded from it, we see what will shortly be the test of us all: *At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.—And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.* If there be any thing of importance in this world, it is, to be *ready* when the Lord cometh; not by such preparations as those to which sinners are apt to flee when their fears are alarmed, but by believing in the Son of God, and keeping his commandments. *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* Look off from every other dependence, and put your trust in him. *He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.—Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching!*

THE GOSPEL THE ONLY EFFECTUAL MEAN OF PRODUCING UNIVERSAL PEACE AMONG MANKIND.

SERMON XV.

MAL. iv. 5, 6.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

MALACHI, the last of the Old-Testament prophets, lived in an age of great degeneracy ; and much of his prophecy is taken up in bearing testimony against it. The last two chapters, however, inform us of a remnant who feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. Partly for their encouragement, and partly for the awakening of the careless, he introduces the coming of the Messiah, and intimates, that the very next prophet who should be sent would be his harbinger.

That we may understand the passage first read, I shall offer a few observations upon it.

1. John the Baptist is here called *Elijah the prophet*, because he would be, as it were, another Elijah ; resembling him not only in his austerity and general appearance, but in the spirit and power with which he preached : *And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to*

the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

2. The coming of Christ is called *that great and terrible day of the Lord.* This may seem to disagree with the general current of prophecy. It is common for the prophets to represent this great event as a source of unusual joy, and to call not men only, but the very inanimate creation, to join in it. The truth is, the same event which afforded joy to those who received him, brought desolation and destruction to those who received him not. It is in this light that the prophet represents it in chap. iii. 2. *Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?* And the fact was, that for its rejection of him such tribulations came upon the Jewish nation, as were not since the beginning of the world to that time, and would never be again. This was the *day* referred to in verse 1, which should *burn as an oven;* when all the proud, and all that should do wickedly would be stubble; the day should burn them up, and leave them neither root nor branch.

3. It is intimated, that, previously to the ministry of John, there would be great dissensions and bitter animosities among the Jewish people; parents at variance with their children, and children with their parents: altogether producing such a state of society, that, if there had been no change for the better, the land might have been smitten with a curse, sooner than it was. Subjugated by the Romans, one part of the nation, for the sake of private interest, sided with them, and accepted places under them; by which they became odious in the eyes of the other. Some became soldiers under the Roman standard, and treated their brethren with violence; others became publicans, or farmers of the public taxes, entering deeply into a system of oppression. A spirit of selfishness pervaded all ranks and orders of men, prompting those on one side to deeds of oppression, and those on the other to discontent and bitter antipathies. Besides this, they were divided into a number of religious sects, which bore the most inveterate hatred to each other, and were all far off from truth and godliness.

4. It is predicted, that John's ministry should have a conciliating influence, turning men's hearts one to another, and so tending

to avert the curse which hung over them. Such were actually the effects of it. Nor were they accomplished by a mere interference between the parties, or by labouring to produce a mere outward reformation; but by first turning them to God, through Jesus Christ. Hence Luke, in quoting the words of Malachi, connects the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children with the turning of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and the making ready a people prepared for the Lord. John's errand was, to call sinners to repentance; adding, withal, that they should believe in him that should come after him. And, wherever this effect was produced, a new bond of union existed, and former antipathies were forgotten. The exhortations also which he gave to those who repented, and applied for baptism, were such as struck at every species of selfishness, and tended to promote peace and unanimity among men. He called for *fruits meet for repentance. The* PEOPLE *asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also* PUBLICANS *to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the* SOLDIERS *likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.* Such repentance, and such fruits, so far as they prevailed, must produce the most happy effect upon the country, and tend to avert the curse. Those who believed through the ministry of John, of Christ, or of the apostles, were as the salt of the land; and it might be for their sakes, that its punishment was deferred till forty years after they had crucified the Lord of glory. When God had gathered a people from among them, the remnant grew worse and worse, till, in the end, the curse overtook them. Previously to that *great and terrible day of the Lord*, it was predicted, that to all their other crimes they would add that of the most bitter persecution of Christ's servants. *The brother*, said our Lord, *shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.* Such was the

fact. Having *killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets,* they persecuted his followers ; and that with a rage which not only displeased God, but rendered them odious to men. In short, we see, that, so far as the gospel was received. it tended to heal the country, and to retard the day of evil.

It is easy to perceive, that the same causes, if applied to the world in general, would be productive of the same effects ; or, That the gospel is the only effectual mean of healing the divisions among mankind, and so of turning the curse which hangs over us into a blessing.

That we may see the evidence and importance of this truth, it will be proper to take a view of the divisions which have obtained among men, with their causes and tendency ; of the inefficacy of all human means for removing them ; and of the efficacy of the gospel for this great purpose.

I. Let us take a view of THE DISSENSIONS WHICH HAVE OBTAINED AMONG MEN, WITH THEIR CAUSES AND TENDENCY. The state of the Jewish people, in the times of John, was but an epitome of human nature, as sunk into a gulf of depravity. From the fall of man to this day, the earth has been a scene of discord. Jealousies and antipathies rendered the first born child of Adam a murderer ; and, prior to the flood, *the earth was corrupt before God, and—filled with violence.* Whether war was then reduced to a system, as it has been since, we are not told ; but, if not, it might be owing to the world not being yet divided into nations. The springs of domestic and social life were poisoned ; the tender ties of blood and affinity violated ; and quarrels, intrigues, oppressions, robberies and murders, pervaded the abodes of man.

When that generation was swept away, and a new world arose, from the family of Noah, it might have been expected, that the example which had been so recently exhibited would have had some effect ; but, in a little time, the same things were acted over again. The story of Nimrod, though brief, affords a specimen of what has been going on in the world ever since. What is the history of nations, but an account of a succession of *mighty hunters* and their adherents, each of whom, in his day, caused terror in the land of the living ? The earth has been a kind of theatre, in which one

part of mankind, being trained and furnished with weapons, have been employed to destroy another; and this, in a great measure, for the gratification of the spectators!

Nor is this spirit of discord confined to nations. It pervades, in different degrees, every department of society, civil or religious. If the heavenly plant decay, in any connexion, or among any people, this weed will presently spring up in its place. No sooner did the church at Corinth become degenerate in their principles and conduct, than there were divisions among them. And when the Galatians had corrupted the doctrine of Christ they required to be warned against *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife*, &c. and to be told, that *they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Whence is it that this evil spirit proceeds? Doomed as men are to innumerable evils during their short residence upon earth, and to death as the issue, one would think it might excite a sympathy towards each other as fellow-sufferers, and a concern to mitigate, rather than to increase, the miseries of their situation. And when such things are viewed generally and abstractedly, there are few men who would not admit so much as this, and wonder, indeed, that the world cannot live in peace. But when particular cases occur, and the general good is thought to clash with private interest, all these reasonings evaporate like smoke, and the *lusts* which war in the members bear down every thing before them. The root of the evil lies in our having *forsaken God*, and become alienated from *him*. It was the law of our creation, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself:* and there is a closer connexion between these different branches of the law than we are apt to suppose. If we love God, we shall love our brother also. For a man to *fear God*, was sufficient to insure a just, kind, and humane treatment of his fellow men. But if we cease to love *him*, we shall not be able to love one another, unless it be for our own sake. It is the love of ourselves only that, in this case, governs us: and this is a principle which, not being subordinate to the love of God, is of the essence of sin, and tends, in its own nature, to fill the world with discord. Men form connexions, some on a

small, and some on a larger scale: but, where self-love is the motive, every thing is expected to be done for their own honour, interest, or happiness; and the same thing being expected on the other side, there is no place for concord.

If two persons bear an affectionate good will to each other as children of the same family, and each seek the good of the other from the pleasure of doing him good, and without so much as thinking that is to issue in his own advantage, it *will* issue in his own advantage; and that, to a far greater degree than if he had directly sought it: for God has so constituted things, that in seeking another's good, we shall find our own. If parents and children, husbands and wives, feel only for themselves, they will resemble men in a famine, in which *no man spareth his brother:* one snatches on the right hand, and is hungry: another eats on the left hand and is not satisfied. But if they feel one for another; if like the widow of Zarephath by Elijah, each one be willing to divide his morsel; that morsel becomes seven times more sweet, and God often blesses and increases it till the return of plenty.

These remarks are equally applicable to nations, as to individuals and families. It is owing to self-love having taken place of the love of God, that treaties of alliance and commerce are so frequently broken. While each party seeks nothing but its own interest, and requires that of the other to give place to it, it is impossible that concord should be of any continuance. If such leagues be not at once dissolved, it is merely in consideration of the one party hoping to gain, *notwithstanding* the selfishness of the other, or fearing that greater evils will result from the breach than from the fulfilment of the treaty. But unions on so frigid a principle are unworthy of the name.

It is not difficult to perceive, what must be the *tendency* of such a state of things. Nothing can better express it than the words of the Lord by the prophet, *Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* Where the love of God has no place, and self-love is the ruling principle in every department of society, every thing is ripening for destruction. If the whole earth were in this state, it would be like the barren fig-tree, and Heaven would say, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* It were better that there should be no world than such a world as this.

II. Consider THE INEFFICACY OF ALL HUMAN MEANS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THESE EVILS. The miseries produced in the earth by discord are so serious, that it is become the necessary study of the thinking part of mankind to counteract them. Had the love of God ruled in the heart, this had been the cement of the world. Had men been ten thousand times more numerous than they are, this would have bound them all together; but, this principle being extinct, others of a very inferior nature must be substituted in its place. It is partly by softening the asperities of human nature, and partly by cultivating its most pacific principles, that any thing is effected: but though these means may diminish the evil, yet they cannot produc e any thing like a radical cure. Let us instance in a few particulars:

First, Great things have been done by *education*. By a course of discipline in early life, mankind are taught to avoid all rude and provoking language and to carry it courteously and respectfully to all about them. Even harsh things, if expressed in soft and gentle terms, will, in a good degree, loose their harshness, and tend to disarm the party of resentment. *A soft answer turneth away wrath*, while *grievous words stir up anger*. Herein consists the difference between barbarous and civilized society; a difference for which there is great cause for thankfulness. But, after all, the change which is hereby effected is nearly confined to the surface of things; the real temper of the heart is much the same. The grand study in this science, is appearance. The most bitter and malignant speeches are uttered without shame by those who reckon themselves gentlemen; and murder itself is patronized by the laws of honour. It were a difficult question to determine, which would be the least friendly to human happiness, for the whole world to be sunk into the lowest state of barbarism, or raised to these haughty and atheistical notions of honour. Assuredly, this is not the way in which universal peace will be produced on earth.

Another principle to which great things also are ascribed is, *a union of interests*. It is an undoubted fact, that God, in his providence, has so interwoven the interests of mankind, that they cannot subsist without each other. We talk proudly of independence; but we are all dependent, both upon God and one another.

What would any individual be, if left alone? What would a family be, if separated from all other families? What would cities be without the country, or the country without cities? Nay, what would nations be, if shut out from all intercourse with other nations? These considerations ought, no doubt, to induce mankind, of all ranks, degrees, and situations, to study the things which make for peace: and to say that they actually have no influence in promoting concord, would be saying what is manifestly untrue. To this principle we are indebted for the stifling of thousands of quarrels, which would otherwise burst forth, and render society intolerable. To this also we are indebted for the suppression of a very large portion of religious hatred. Considering the enmity of wicked men against serious Christians, instead of being surprised at its breaking out so much as it does, we have more reason to be surprised that it breaks out no more. Had not God so bound mankind together, that they cannot obtain their own ends without being civil and kind to others, where there is one instance of bitter persecution, we might expect a hundred; and the same may be said of every other species of malevolence.

But, though such a constitution of things furnishes matter for thankfulness, yet it is utterly inadequate to the producing of peace on earth, and good will to men. Stifled animosity is very different from love; the good understanding which arises from it, is not peace but the mere suspension of hostilities for the sake of convenience. It has been said, that the only thing necessary to produce universal peace is, that mankind be enlightened to know their true interests. Certain it is, that if our true interests were known and pursued, we should seek the good of mankind in all that we have to do with them: but sin, operating in a way of selfishness, blinds the mind, and prompts men to seek their own interest, in opposition to that of others. Such also is the strength of corrupt propensity in men, that in many cases, which must appear to be injurious to themselves, as well as others, they will frequently give way to it, whatever be the consequence, and even ruin themselves for the sake of ruining their neighbours. It is not, therefore, on this ground, that we can rationally build our hope of any essential amelioration of the state of mankind.

Let us examine a third principle ; namely, *government.* This is, doubtless, an important blessing to mankind. It is among the means by which God, in his providence, preserves the world in some degree of order. The peace of the governed, so far as it respects one another, is hereby in a measure, secured. If a nation were for one week, or half that time, without law, they would learn, by woful experience, the value of living under it. The most oppressive governments are preferable to a state of anarchy. It may be on this account, that even that of Nero afforded no exception to the general doctrine of government being ordained of God for good. But though order may be produced by human laws and regulations, yet it is chiefly confined to the exterior of human action. And with respect to that, it extends only to a single territory ; between one country and another there is no paramount authority to settle their differences. What are termed the laws of nations have but little influence, when one nation possesses the means of setting them at defiance. It is in vain to deny, that the most effective law in the world is *power;* and as power is constantly varying, the world, in one part or other, is constantly in a state of warfare. Great conquerors call themselves *benefactors,* and require to be called so, even by the conquered ; and, what is worse, are admired, and praised for their exploits, in the page of history.

But the hopes which have been entertained of peace pervading the earth by means of government, have arisen, not from the thing itself, but from *certain forms of it.* There is, no doubt, a difference as to these. That form of government, be it what it may, which contributes most to the administration of substantial justice in a country, and cuts of the motives to war in respect of other countries, is the best ; but while men are corrupt, selfish and ambitious, and possess the means of extending their power, they will never be in want of a plea for disturbing the repose of mankind. To expect them, under such circumstances, to be restrained by forms of their own creating, is expecting too much, and indicates but a slender acquaintance with human nature. A form that should leave no scope for the propensities of a people would be borne away before them in a little time. To banish wars from

the earth, therefore it is necessary to banish selfishness, ambition, and other corrupt affections, which produce them. Even allowing a nation and its government to be, upon the whole, justly and peaceably disposed; yet, as cases will be always occurring, in which its interests will clash with those of other nations, and in which amicable discussion, through the partiality which each side feels for its own cause, fails to produce mutual satisfaction, the consequence will often be a recourse to arms. The principles on which wars are undertaken are, in many instances, the same as those by which two individuals are prompted to fight a duel. They *may* have no desire to fight, nor to kill each other; but the laws of honour require them to act as they do! So long, therefore, as these laws, to the exclusion of the laws of God, continue to rule the higher orders of mankind, it is impossible but that wars and fightings will come.

But if education, interest, and government, fail to produce the desired effect; yet is there no other principle, whose influence shall extend more to the heart, by which it may be accomplished? If there be, it must be *kindred*, or *relationship*. This, I acknowledge has done great things. By the tender and endearing ties of blood and affinity the asperities of human nature are greatly softened, and God has, in a manner, bound us together. From hence, perhaps, the practicability of mankind dwelling together in families. By alliances of this sort, a good understanding is frequently kept up in neighbourhoods, and, sometimes, between great nations. Natural affection, though, in itself, it be mere animal attachment, and has nothing morally good in it, yet to be without it argues the perfection of depravity. Nothing short of an habitually wicked heart can extinguish it. If this principle be overcome, there seems to be nothing left in human nature that can withstand the tide of corruption. It is, therefore, with peculiar force and propriety, that God, by the prophet, represents the depravity of the Jewish nation as having set the hearts of the fathers against their children, and the hearts of the children against their fathers; and having reached this height, as being incurable by any thing short of a divine interposition.

Strong as are the ties of blood and affinity, yet there are two reasons why universal peace can never be expected to proceed from them. One is, their influence extends only to a small part of mankind. It is true, we are all akin as creatures, and as having sprung from one common ancestor: this, however, is a consideration that has but little weight among the bulk of mankind. It is only towards *near* relations that the attachment in question is felt. The other is, that, even with respect to that part of mankind who are nearly related to each other, there is, in general, no such attachment as to overbalance the selfish affections.

The sum is, there is not a principle in human nature from which any rational expectation can be formed of the world ever becoming materially different from what it is. It may be more enlightened; but this will present no sufficient barrier against the tide of corrupt passions, which bears along its stream the educated part of mankind, no less than the uneducated. Man may shift and change into a thousand forms, and may promise himself peace in each of them: but he will not find it. He may attribute his misery to circumstances, and flatter himself, that, if *they* were different, all would be well: the cause however, is in himself, and is, therefore, sure to accompany him in every situation and condition. He may "change the place, but will keep the pain." If there were no hope from a higher quarter, the world would be shut up under sin, and have nothing to expect, but to be smitten with the curse.

III. Consider THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE DIFFUSION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE. That which was wrought among the Jews by the preaching of John, furnished a specimen of what should be wrought in the world at large by the same means. They who had been disobedient were turned to the wisdom of the just. Repenting of their sins, they believed in the Messiah as at hand; and, being thus reconciled to God, they became reconciled to one another: loving and being loved, forgiving and being forgiven.

In ascribing these effects to the gospel, we only ascribe to it that which in its own nature, it is evidently adapted to produce; that which it actually has produced, so far as it has been cordially re-

ceived ; and that which the tenor of scripture-prophecy gives us to expect.

1. *The Gospel is in its own nature, evidently adapted to produce peace on earth, and good will to men.* It may, indeed, be the *occasion* of contention and bitterness, in unbelievers ; but this is not its proper effect : it is accidental to it, and reflects no more dishonour upon it, than the good works of its Author, which occasioned his being stoned by the Jews, reflected upon him.

We have seen already, that the root of all the discord in the world is found in mankind having *forsaken God :* that, therefore, which is the means of bringing them back to God, and that only, will restore concord. It is thus that the root of bitterness is plucked up, and love the plant of paradise, substituted in its place. We have seen, that *wars and fightings* proceed from the *lusts* which war in our members : that, therefore, which teaches us to mortify these lusts, removes the causes, and by so doing, removes the effests. Pride, self-will, and the love of money, are the great sources of those calamities which, in all ages, have deluged the world with misery ; but, if we believe the gopel, they will be, in a good measure dried up, and then the current which has been fed by them must cease to flow. *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.*

The Gospel is a system *in direct opposition to selfishness.* It not only enforces a benevolent disposition, but is fraught with principles adapted to promote it. It furnishes the mind with a new set of views and feelings, both toward God, and toward man. It tells us of one, who, when all other means failed, said, *Lo, I come—to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart ;* of one who laid down his life for us, even when we were yet enemies. Now, to imbibe this doctrine is to become in a measure, of the same mind. He that is born of God possesses the spirit of a little child. *Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.* Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as a new-born babe he desireth the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby.

The gospel also furnishes us with a *centre* or *bond, of union.* Devoid of this, men are like grains of sand, without any principle

of adhesion, and must therefore, of necessity, be divided and scattered. The physical strength of a nation is of small account in a time of danger, if they have no standard to repair to, and no leader and commander in whom they can place confidence. But a wise and patriotic prince will hold a people together, and induce them to love their country, and one another the better for his sake. Such is our Redeemer, and such the love of one another which love to him inspires. Yea, more, it teaches us to love all mankind, from a hope that they may become his friends.

Now, if such sentiments and feelings were universal, or if only the greater part of mankind possessed them, the world, from being a wilderness, would become a paradise. Instead of the thorn, would come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier, the myrtle-tree: and it would be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that should not be cut off.

2. *The gospel, so far as it has been cordially received, has actually produced these effects.* I say *cordially* received; for it has met with a kind of reception that is not cordial, and to call which *believing*, we must understand the term in a very restricted and partial sense. We have been asked, by unbelievers, 'How is it, if Christianity be that pacific system which it professes to be, that Christian nations do not live in peace?' We answer, 1. Because a very large proportion of the people who inhabit those nations, are Christians only in name. When any question arises between serious Christians and avowed unbelievers, persons of this discription commonly prove themselves to be one in heart with the latter, and ought, therefore; to be classed with them: 2. Because those who believe the doctrine which they profess, and are real Christians, yet do not always act consistently with their profession. These things certainly furnish occasion for the unbelieving part of the world, who seek occasion, to stumble at the gospel: hence a woe is pronounced on the world because of offences, or stumbling-blocks, and a still heavier one on those by whom the offence cometh. Yet, notwithstanding these deductions, Christianity has wrought enough to establish its pacific character. We could tell of myriads who, from being persecutors and injurious, like Saul of Tarsus, no sooner embraced the gospel than they became other

men; seeking the good of all around them, even of their worst enemies. We could appeal to the pacific spirit and conduct of thousands in our own times, who influenced by the same principles, seek, by every mean in their power, to heal the divisions, and alleviate the miseries of mankind.

If the Christians scattered over bleednig Europe could have healed her, she would have been healed before now. They, as well as other men, may have been engaged in the wars; and when called for in defence of their country, it may have been their duty so to do; but they have surely hailed the return of peace; and that not for their own sakes only, but from good will to men.

Why should unbelievers load Christianity with the persecutions, intrigues, and unjust wars, which have been carried on in Christendom; when, if they were disposed to judge righteously, they must allow, not only that the same things existed, and were accompanied with much more ferocity, under the heathen governments, but that what has existed since, is not to be ascribed to Christianity, but to the want of it? It was not till the gospel was corrupted, and in a manner lost, among those who called themselves *the church*, that such things occurred. Instead, therefore, of their proving any thing against the pure and peaceful nature of genuine Christianity, they furnish an argument in its favour. The immoralities in the churches at Corinth and in Galatia, when they had corrupted the gospel, were a proof of its moral, rather than of its immoral tendency. Is it to Christ or to Antichrist that the blood which has been shed for the last twelve hundred years, on account of religion, ought to be imputed? Have the attrocities committed by Europeans on the shores of Africa, and in other parts of the world, been owing to Christianity, or to the want of it? Let truth and conscience give the answer.

3. The tenor of scripture prophecy gives us to expect far greater effects than those which have yet been produced. The world, like an abandoned sinner, may go on till it is *wearied in the greatness of its way;* but, if we believe in God and his prophets, we must conclude that it will not be so always. It was one great end of Christ's coming into the world, *to set judgment in the earth;* and though he have to encounter great opposition, yet

shall he *not fail, nor be discouraged*, till it be accomplishnd. The present disorders of the world will assuredly issue in a peaceful and happy state of things. Of this the following, among many other passages, it is presumed, afford ample proof:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.—And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, *as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.—The jealousy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the enmity of Judah shall be no more: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.—The greaves of the armed warrior in conflict, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire.* For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called—*THE PRINCE OF PEACE. *Of the increase of his governmeut and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.—In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.—God be merciful unto us, and bless us: and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and gov-*

* Lowth's Isaiah.

ern the nations upon earth.—And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and shall be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

There are some, who, by refining on the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, have concluded that things will always continue much the same as they are now; and that to understand these prophecies as denoting a general spread of the gospel over the various nations of the earth, would be holding with national establishments of religion, and symbolizing with the Jews in their expectation of a worldly kingdom! If these persons be capable of deriving happiness from such opinions, we need not envy them; nor can we be surprised at their feeling no more interest in the conversion of sinners, and taking no more pains to accomplish it, than they have hitherto done. If there be any symbolizing with the carnal Jews on either side, it would seem to consist in that selfish spirit which would confine the gospel to those who already possess it, *forbidding us*, in a manner, *to speak to the Gentiles that they may*

be saved. I have no wish to decide, how far the mind of a Christian may be perverted by the infatuating influence of hypothesis, nor how far he may be suffered to pervert the word of God in supporting it; but of this I am satisfied, that such notions are in their very essence, antichristian.

Taking the foregoing passages in their simple and obvious meaning, they manifestly predict things which, hitherto, have had no accomplishment, or at most only a partial one. The earth has not yet been *full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.* God's *saving health* has not yet been so *known among all nations,* as for *all the people* to form a kind of chorus in his praise. It is not as yet, that Christ, as the head of a spiritual kingdom, *judges* and *governs the nations upon earth.* The time is not yet arrived for *swords to be beaten into plough-shares and spears into pruning-hooks. The garment rolled in blood* has not yet become *a burning, even fuel for the fire.* Christ's reign seems not, as yet, to have assumed the character of a *glorious rest:* hitherto, it has borne a greater resemblance to that of David, who was engaged in continual wars, than to that of Solomon, to whom the Lord gave rest on every side, and who was therefore employed in building a temple for his name. It is said of the promises made to Abraham and his posterity, that *The Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein:* and that *The Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers. —There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.* But, if things continue much the same as they now are to the end of time, I do not perceive how this language could apply to the promises made to Christ and the church. In this case, the prophets must have dealt largely in hyperbole, and their words, when reduced to meaning, amount to but little, in comparison of what they would seem to convey.

It is farther observable, from the foregoing prophecies, that, whatever evils may precede the triumph of the gospel, yet that the thing itself will take place without bloodshed, treachery, intrigue, tumult, or parade. The overturning of those government

which set themselves against the preaching of it may be necessary to prepare the way; and this may be accomplished by wicked men and wicked means: but this will be only as the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, to the still small voice. The noise of hammers and axes, though necessary in preparing for the temple, was not to be heard in the building of it. The kingdoms of this world are commonly founded either in violence, or in deceit, and often in both; but that of *the Prince of Peace* will correspond with his character: justice and judgment will be the basis of his throne. He himself hath *done no* VIOLENCE, neither was *any* DECEIT *in his mouth;* and, however he may turn such measures in his enemies to the advantage of his cause, he will never allow his servants to have recourse to them. The *peace* produced by other conquerors is merely the effect of fear. It is the stillness of the oppressed, who dare not complain, lest their oppression should be increased: but the peace promised under the reign of Christ, is ascribed to the earth being *filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.* His conquests are those of the heart. His subjects will be such from conviction and choice.

The kingdoms of this world are introduced and supported by parade: but it will not be so with the kingdom of Christ. This, as he told the Pharisees, came *not by observation*, or outward show, neither should they say, *Lo, here, or lo there;* for it was already among them. And thus, we may conclude, it will come, when it shall fill the whole earth. Men shall not be able to point to this place, or that, and say, 'Lo it is here, or lo it is there:' for, before they are aware, it shall be among them. Worldly men may, at the time, be pursuing their shemes with such earnestness as to think no more of it than Festus did *of one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive*: but, while they are pursuing their schemes, God will have so pursued his, as that they shall find themselves surrounded by it in every direction, and as unable to stop its progress as the Jewish rulers were, when they complained of the apostles for having *filled Jerusalem with their doctrine.* In this silent and imperceptible way the gospel continued to operate in the early ages, when it was left to its own evidence, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to recommend it. In the days of Ter-

tullian, that is, in less than two hundred years after the death of Christ, that apologist could tell the Roman senate, that it had overspread their empire. "Your cities, islands, forts, towns, and assemblies; your very camps, wards, companies, palace, senate, forum, all," said he, "swarm with Christians." Yet all appears to have been conducted without violence or tumult, save that which was found among unbelievers.

We read of the stone cut out of the mountain breaking in pieces the great monarchies of the earth; of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; of his judging the people righteously, and governing the nations upon earth; and of the kingdom under the whole heaven being given to the people of the saints of the Most High. But it does not follow, that governments will be destroyed *as governments*, but merely as *idolatrous* or *antichristian governments*. We have no reason to think, that Christ will abolish civil authorities, and set up a government of his own in their stead. His kingdom never was, and never will be, of this world. If the government of nations, as well as that of lesser societies, be CONDUCTED ON CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, then will Christ reign; then will the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and then may the nations be glad, and sing for joy. These principles, existing in the hearts of governors and governed, would shortly burst the bands of oppression, still the tumults of the people, and cause wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The dæmon of discord might then be addressed in the language of the psalmist: *O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end; and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure forever; he hath prepared his throne for judgment.*

And now, things being reduced to this peaceful state, itstead of the earth being *smitten with a curse*, we are given to expect, that it will be loaded with blessings: *Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God shall bless us. And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.* Nor do I see any objection to the *increase* here predicted being literally understood. It is a fact, that, from the day that man departed from God, the earth was cursed

with barrenness, in comparison of what it was before; and it is not unnatural to suppose, that, when the greater part of men shall have returned to him, this curse may be, in a manner, removed. At present, the system of depravity which prevails among men, renders it *unnecessary*. Sin counteracts the tendency to *increase and multiply*, with which we were created. The world is, in a manner, depopulated by selfishness, intemperance, and war; and a great part of it inhabited by wild beasts and other noxious creatures. But, when men shall know the Lord, and these wide-wasting evils shall subside, population will increase; and he that sends men will amply provide for them: *In that city will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle, out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.*

Moreover, at present, the system of depravity which prevails among men would render any considerable increase of earthly fulness exceedingly *dangerous*. There appears to be as much wisdom and goodness, as there is justice, in the sentence passed on man, to eat bread by the sweat of their faces. Were there no necessity for hard labour, every day might be taken up in riot and debauchery. The deeds of the people of Sodom and of the Canaanites might be reacted. The bacchanalian revels which are seen at some of our contested elections, (where men can indulge free of expense,) afford a specimen of what might be expected, if God, while men are what they are, were to cause the earth to yield her increase. It would be nothing less than furnishing them with the means of being seven times more wicked. But, when men shall know the Lord, the danger will have subsided; and then, he will take pleasure in pouring fourth his blessings upon them, and then, instead of those blessings being abused, as heretofore, they

shall tend to recommend the gospel: *God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.*

Once more: As peace among men will be followed with a blessing on the earth, so peace among Christians will be followed with a blessing on the means of grace. The depravity which has hitherto prevailed in the world has, in too great a measure, extended to the church, and wrought much in a way of destroying its fruitfulness. Corruptions have produced divisions, envies, jealousies, and almost every evil work. Hence the blessing o God has been, in a great measure, withheld. We read of great things among the apostles and primitive Christians, and, now and then, hear of a minister and a people, who, approaching somewhat near to their doctrine and spirit, are honoured with a portion of their success: but, in general, we are as *when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat*, though our souls desire the first-ripe fruit. Now, as the carnal notions, envies, and petty discords of the apostles ceased from the time of their Lord's resurrection, and as *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul*, so will it be with the whole church of Christ, when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high. And then, *the earth shall yield her increase*, in a still higher sense. Not only every nation and city, but every town, if not every village, will furnish a church of Christ, *walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.* Then will God, even their own God, bless them, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. The people of God will be of good comfort, will be of one mind, will live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with them!

From the whole we may conclude,

1. It becomes Christians to set their hearts much on the spread of the gospel; to pray for it; labour for it; contribute of their substance for it; and to rest all their hopes of the amelioration of the state of mankind upon it. Political men may place their hopes on political changes; but Christians should always remember, that *peace on earth and good will to men* connect with *glory to God in*

the highest; and that they are reserved to grace the triumphs of the Prince of Peace.

2. It is of infinite importance for us to repent, and believe the gospel. So long as any of us are unbelievers, we are under the curse; and the whole career of our life tends to draw down the curse of Heaven upon us, and upon the earth on which we dwell. We have heard much of the conversion of the Jews and heathens; but of what account will either be to us, if we ourselves be not converted? All the great and good things which the Lord has promised, either in this world or that which is to come, will, if we be unbelievers, only aggravate our misery.

3. Sinners, even the greatest of sinners, have every encouragement to repent, and believe in Jesus. The invitation of Moses to Hobab is the same, for substance, as Christ's servants are now warranted to address to every one they meet: *We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.*

SERMON XVI.

JOHN i. 10—12.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

AMONG the numerous self-deceiving notions which are cherished in the minds of men, is that of their being willing to return to God at any time, provided they had opportunity, and the means of doing so. In accounting for their own impenitence and perseverance in sin, they will impute it to their situation, their temptations, their callings, their connexions, or to any thing but their evil hearts. Some have even learned to speak evil of their hearts, while it is manifest, that they mean to include, under that term, nothing pertaining to intention, desire, or design, but something that exists and operates in them against their inclination. Hence, you will often hear them acknowledge themselves to be unconverted, and, at the same time, express how willing and desirous they are of being converted, if it would but please God to put forth his power in their favour. The word of God, however,

speaks a different language; while it ascribes all that is good to grace only, it lays the evil at the sinner's own door.

A great number of instances might be alledged from the scriptures, in proof of this truth; but the greatest proof of all is the manner in which Christ himself was treated, when he appeared upon earth. The Evangelist, having introduced him to his reader in all the glory of divinity, describes, in plaintive language, the neglect and contempt he met with, both from the world in general, and from his own nation in particular. Let us examine these complaints.

He was in the world. It has often been objected, 'If the religion of Christ has a claim on the world, why has not the world had more of an opportunity to hear it?' It might be the design of the Evangelist to obviate this objection. His being *in the world* does not seem to refer so much to his personal presence among men in the days of his flesh, as to those manifestations of him, which, from the beginning of the world, had furnished them with the means of knowing him, and which, therefore, rendered their ignorance inexcusable. He had been revealed, at the outset of the world, as the Woman's Seed, who should bruise the head of the serpent. Sacrifices were appointed to prefigure his atonement; which, though perverted, were never discontinued, even among the heathen. The selection of the seed of Abraham, and their miraculous settlement in Canaan, must have attracted universal attention; and, as the Messiah was a prominent feature of their religion, he was in a manner, proclaimed through every nation. The effect produced on the mariners, when Jonah told them that he was a Hebrew and feared JEHOVAH, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, shows very plainly, that the displays of omnipotence, in behalf of Israel, were not unknown to the surrounding nations. That also, which was soon after produced on the Ninevites, when they learned that he was a Hebrew prophet, sent of God, evinces the same thing. And, if they were not ignorant of God's judgments, they were not destitute of the means of enquiring after the true religion. Nay, more, the expectation of the promised Messiah was, for a long time before he appeared, very general among the nations. Had

they, therefore, possessed any portion of a right spirit, or any desire after the true God, they would have been as inquisitive as were the wise men of the east, and as desirous as they were of paying him homage.

Not only was he in the world, so as to render their ignorance of him inexcusable, but *the world itself was made by him.* Though, as to the state of their minds, they were far from him, yet he was not far from every one of them ; for in him they lived and moved and had their being. When he became incarnate, it was nothing less than their Creator in every deed dwelling with them upon the earth. Such an event ought to have excited universal inquiry, and to have induced all men every where to repent.

But, though he was in the world, and the world was made by him, *yet the world knew him not!* Full of their own schemes and pursuits, they thought nothing of him. The Roman Governors, in hearing the accusations of the Jews against Paul, and his defences, had great opportunities of knowing the truth ; but the ignorance and contempt expressed by Festus, in his report of the matter to Agrippa, show the inefficacy of all means, unless accompanied with the mighty power of God. The Jews *brought none accusation of such things as* he *supposed ; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive!*

But this is not the heaviest complaint: *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* How appropriate are the terms here used! He *was* in the world, and, therefore, within the reach of inquiry. But to the seed of Abraham he *came*, knocking as it were, at their door for admission ; but *they received him not.* The world are accused of ignorance ; but they of unbelief: for *receiving him not*, though a merely negative form of speech, yet is expressive of a positive refusal of him. Instead of welcoming the heavenly visitant, they drove him from their door, and even banished him from the earth. Who would have supposed, that a people whose believing ancestors had been earnestly expecting the Messiah for a succession of ages, would have rejected him, when he came among them? Yet so it was: and if Jews or Deists of the present day ask, ' How could these things

be ?' we answer it was foretold by their own prophets, that he should possess neither form nor comeliness in their eyes, and that when they should see him, there would be no beauty that they should desire him.

The consideration of their being *his own* people, the children of Abraham his friend, added to their sin, and to his affliction. It was this which he so pathetically lamented, when he *beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Grievous, however, as this treatment was to our blessed Lord, he was not utterly disregarded. Though the world, in general, knew him not, and though the great body of his own nation rejected him ; yet there was *a remnant according to the election of grace*, partly Jews and partly Gentiles, who received him: and, whether they had been previously distinguished by their sobriety, or by their profligacy ; whether they came in companies, as under Peter's sermon, or as individuals, like her who wept, and washed his feet, or him who sought mercy, when expiring by his side on the cross ; all were received by him, and raised to the highest dignity : *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* And thus, though Israel was not gathered, yet Christ was glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and had a people given him from among the heathen.

I need not say, that the treatment which our Saviour received is the same, for substance, in all ages. There is a world that still knows him not, and many who, though possessed of the means of grace, yet receive him not: and, blessed be God! there are also many, both Jews and Gentiles, who still receive him, and are still blessed with the privilege of being adopted into his heavenly family.

That we may understand and feel the importance of the subject, I shall first inquire, What is supposed and included in receiving Christ ? secondly, consider the great privilege annexed to it: and, lastly, observe the wisdom of God in rendering the reception of Christ the great turning point of salvation.

I. Let us inquire, WHAT IS SUPPOSED AND INCLUDED IN RECEIVING CHRIST? The phrase is supposed to be equivalent with *believing on his name.* To receive Christ is to believe in him; and to believe in Christ, is to receive him. There are some slight shades of difference between these and some other terms which are used to express faith in Christ; such as *believing*, *trusting*, *receiving*, &c. but they must be the same in substance, or they would not be used in the New Testament as convertible terms. Believing, seems to respect Christ as exhibited in the gospel-testimony; trusting, as revealed with promise; and receiving supposes him to be God's free gift, presented to us for acceptance in the invitations of the gospel: but, as I said, all come to the same issue. He that believeth the testimony, trusteth the promise, and receiveth the gift; and the whole is necessary to an interest in his benefits, whether pardon, justification, adoption, or any other spiritual blessing.

If we were inquiring into the nature of believing, it might be necessary to examine the testimony; if of trusting, we must ascertain, wherein consists the promise; and so, if we would form just conceptions of receiving Christ, we must observe, what is said of the gift of him: for each is the standard of the other, and will be found to correspond with it: So *we preached, and* so *ye believed.*

Considering Christ, then, as the gift of God, it is necessary to observe, that he is the *first* and *chief* of all his gifts, and that for his sake all others are bestowed: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not* WITH HIM *also freely give us all things?* Other gifts may be so great, that nothing in this world can be compared with them: this, however, is the greatest. It is great for God to forbear with us; greater, to forgive us; and greater still, to accept and crown us with eternal life: but all this is supposed to be small, in comparison of the gift of his own Son; and therefore it is argued, that, having bestowed the greater, we may trust him for the less. But, if God first give Christ, and, with him, all things freely, we must first receive Christ, and, with him all things freely. The first exercise of faith, therefore, does not consist in receiving the benefits resulting from his death, or in a persuasion of our sins being forgiven, but in

receiving Christ; and, having received him, we, *with him*, receive an interest in those benefits. Hence, the propriety of such language as this: *He that* HATH *the Son, hath life: and he that* HATH NOT *the Son of God, hath not life.*

It is on this principle, that union with Christ is represented as the foundation of an interest in his benefits, as it is in the following passages: *Of him are ye* IN *Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us* WISDOM, *and* RIGHTEOUSNESS, *and* SANCTIFICATION, *and* REDEMPTION.—*There is therefore now* NO CONDEMNATION *to them that are* IN *Christ Jesus.—That I may be found,* IN *him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* It is thus in the marriage-union, to which that of believers with Christ is compared. As she that is joined to a husband becomes interested in all that he possesses, so they that are joined to Christ are, by the gracious constitution of the gospel, interested in all that he possesses. He is heir of all things, and they are joint heirs with him. The sum is, that receiving Christ is the great turning point of salvation, or that by which we obtain a revealed interest in all the blessings of the gospel.

But, more particularly, to receive Christ pre-supposes a sense of sin, and of our exposedness to the just displeasure of God. It is a great error to hold up a sense of sin as a qualification which gives us a warrant to receive the Saviour, and so to consider the invitations of the gospel as addressed to sensible sinners only; as this must necessarily teach men to reckon themselves the favourites of God, while yet they are in a state of unbelief. But it is no less an error to suppose, that any sinner will receive the Saviour without perceiving and feeling his need of him. It is one thing to require a sense of sin as a qualification that gives a warrant to receive the Saviour, and another, to plead for it as necessary, in the nature of things, to a compliance with that warrant. What is the reason that Christ is rejected, and the gospel made light of, by the great body of mankind? Is it not, as the scriptures represent it, because they are whole in their own eyes, and therefore think they need no physician? While men are righteous in their own esteem, the gospel must appear to be a strange doctrine, and the

dwelling so much upon Christ, in the ministry of the word, a strange conduct. How is it, that the doctrine of salvation by grace, through the atonement of the Son of God, should be so generally opposed, even by nominal Christians? The reason is the same. Sin is considered as a light thing, a mere frailty, or imperfection, unfortunately attached to human nature; and, while this is the case, there appears to be no need of a mediator, or at least not of one that is divine, and who, to atone for sin, should be required to assume humanity, and render his life a sacrifice. Hence, it is necessary to be convinced of sin, in order to receive the Saviour.

Much of this conviction may respect only our guilt and danger, and so have nothing spiritually good in it: but in those who, in the end, receive the Saviour, it is not wholly so. There is such a thing as *spiritual conviction*, or conviction which involves in it an abhorrence of sin, and of ourselves on account of it. Such is that sense of its intrinsically evil nature, or, as the scriptures speak, of its *exceeding sinfulness*, which is produced by a just view of the spirituality and equity of the divine law. And such is that repentance towards God, which is represented as necessary to faith in Christ, and as included in it. We may be convinced of our guilt and danger by an enlightened conscience only, and may be very sorry for our sin, in reference to its consequences: but this, though it may be used to prepare the way of the Lord, yet will neither divest the sinner of his self-righteous spirit, nor render him willing to come to Christ, that he may have life; and, instead of issuing in his receiving him, may end in his destruction. A sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, on the other hand, tends, in its own nature, to kill a self-righteous spirit, and to induce the sinner to embrace the gospel. It is impossible to have a just sense of the evil of sin, and, at the same time, to object to the way of salvation by grace, through a Mediator.

Again, to receive Christ implies the renunciation of every thing which stands in opposition to him, or comes in competition with him. Viewing Christ as a guest, he stands at the door, and knocks; and why is it kept barred against him? Because the sinner has a variety of other guests already in his house, and is aware, that, if

he enter, they must be dismissed; and, being reluctant to part with them, he cannot find in his heart, at least for the present, to welcome the heavenly visitant. These guests are not only darling sins, but corrupt principles, flesh-pleasing schemes, and a spirit of self-righteous pride. With these Christ cannot associate. If we receive him, we must reject them; and that, not as being forced to it for the sake of escaping the wrath of God, but with all our hearts. Many, considering the necessity of the thing, would willingly receive Christ, so that they might retain what is most dear to them; but, this being inadmissible, they, like him who was nearest of kin to Ruth, decline it, lest they should mar their own inheritance.

It was not so with Moses. He had to *refuse*, as well as *choose*; and, for the sake of Christ, yea, for the *reproach* of Christ, he did refuse even the prospect of a crown. Paul had great advantages by birth, and had acquired many more by application; but, when they came in competition with Christ, all this gain was counted loss. Nor did he ever repent the sacrifice, but, towards the close of life, declared, saying, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.*

Moreover, to receive Christ is expressive of the exercise, not of one faculty only, but of *all the powers of the soul.* If it were merely an exercise of the understanding, as distinguished from the will and affections, it would not be properly opposed to a *rejection* of him, which is manifestly the idea suggested by the term *received him not.* As unbelief includes more than an error in judgment, even an aversion of the heart from Christ, and the way of salvation by his death; so faith includes more than an accurate notion of things, even a cordial acceptance of him, and the way of salvation by him. Nothing short of this can, with any propriety, be considered, as *receiving* him, or as having the promise of eternal life.

Finally: To receive Christ requires to be not only by all in *us*, but to have respect to *all in him.* If we receive Christ as the gift of God, we must receive him for all the purposes for which he is

given. These purposes may be distinguished, and one may come in order after another; but they must not be separated. Were it possible to receive him as an atoning sacrifice without yielding ourselves up to his authority, or to yield ourselves up to his authority without relying on his sacrifice, each would be vain; and, could both of them be united without sitting at his feet as little children, to be instructed in his will, it were still in vain. The invitation of our Lord, in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, shows both the order and connexion of these things: *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* The first concern of a sinner is to *come* to Christ as the *Saviour* of the lost: but, at what time he does this, he must also take his yoke upon him as his *Lord* and *Lawgiver*. Nor is this all: he must take him for his *example;* learning his spirit, and following his steps.

II. Consider THE PRIVILEGE ANNEXED TO RECEIVING CHRIST: *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* The relation of sons seems to be ascribed to believers, in the text and context, on two accounts; viz. their *regeneration*, and their *adoption*. The one is expressed in verse 13: *Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* This consists in a re-impression of the divine image, and is introduced to account for some having received Christ, while others received him not. The other is denominated a *power*, or *privilege*, and belongs to our restoration to the divine favour.

It was a high honour, conferred on our species from the beginning, for God to call himself their father; an honour extended, as it would seem, to no other part of the lower creation. *His tender mercies*, indeed, *are over all his works;* but man was created in his image: *In the image of God created he him.* Men, therefore, are ranked among the children of the Most High. Nor was it a mere name: the love of the Creator was truly that of a father. We see this expressed in the strongest manner, even in the punishment of the wicked; as though it were against the grain of his

native goodness, and as though nothing but a conduct exceedingly offensive could have induced him to do what he did. Such are the ideas in the following passages: *And the Lord said, I will destroy man,* WHOM I HAVE CREATED, *from the face of the earth.*—HE THAT MADE THEM *will not have mercy on them, and* HE THAT FORMED THEM *will show them no favour.* And though it sometimes appears as if sin had, in a manner, extinguished his paternal goodness, yet, in exercising mercy through his Son, he still calls to remembrance the original relation: *I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls* WHICH I HAVE MADE. What an evil and bitter thing, then, must sin be, to have induced so good a God to disown us as *aliens*, and to require, that. if we be again admitted into his family it shall be by *adoption;* a proceeding to which men have recourse, when they wish to favour children that are not their own!

The kindness of God toward Israel is described as an *adoption.* Their deplorable condition in Egypt is represented by that of a a helpless infant. left to perish in the open field in the day that it was born, and by the favour conferred upon them by the kindness of a benevolent stranger, who, passing at the time, had compassion on it, and adopted it as his own. This, however, though an act of grace, and through a mediator, yet was only a shadow of that blessing which is bestowed on them who believe in Jesus Christ. It separated them from other nations, and conferred on them distinguished privileges, but it ascertained no inheritance beyond the grave. This, on the contrary, not only puts us among the children, but gives us *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* The depth of alienation and disgrace from which it takes us, with the height of glory to which it raises us, accounts for that strong language which is more than once used in describing it: *But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?—Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!*

The adoption of children is reckoned among those spiritual blessings wherewith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed them that believe in him, having predestinated them to it by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure

of his will. With all other spiritual blessings, its bestowment is in consequence of our *having been* predestinated to it; but the thing itself, like justification, is a blessing of time, and follows on believing. It were absurd, to speak of our being predestinated to that which was, in itself, eternal. The privilege itself is held up as an inducement to forsake the family of Satan, and be separated from them: *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,—and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

But the connexion between receiving Christ and having power to become the sons of God, is designed to mark, not only the order of time, but that of nature; or to show the influence of the one upon the other: We *are all the children of God* BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. This is exactly the same language as is used of our justification: and the blessing obtained in the same way; not in reward of the act of believing, but out of respect to him in whom we believe. He that believeth on the Son is joined, or united, to him, and as such, by the constitution of the covenant of grace, becomes interested in all his benefits. It is thus that we are justified by faith, and it is thus that we are adopted. Christ, in reward of his obedience unto death, is appointed *heir of all things;* and we, receiving him, are received into God's family for his sake, and become *joint-heirs* with him. Such is the delightful harmony of the gospel, and such the way in which *the adoption of children is* BY JESUS CHRIST *to himself,*—TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE.

Regeneration gives us a new nature; and adoption adds to it a *new name*, even that of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Nor is it a mere name; for the richest blessings both in this world and that which is to come are attached to it. Of these we may reckon the following, as the principal:

1. *Access to God as our own God and Father.* During our unbelief, whatever were our necessities or troubles, we had no access to God. Though under the pangs of woe, we might cry for mercy, yet it was unavailing. How should it be otherwise, when we set at nought the only name by which a sinner can be introduced, and his cause obtain a hearing? But believing in Jesus, we

draw near to God, and God to us. The term προσαγωγὴ, rendered *access*, in Ephes. iii. 12, signifies as much as *introduction*, *manuduction*, or *a being taken by the hand*, as one who is introduced to the king by a third person; teaching us, that we cannot be admitted to the divine presence by ourselves. While obedient, we had free access to our Creator; but, having sinned, the door is shut upon us, and not a child of Adam can see his face, but as introduced by the Mediator. As Job's friends whose folly had offended the divine Majesty, were required to bring their offerings to Job, that he, as a mediator, might present them, and pray for the offenders, so it is with us in drawing near to God. All our offerings must be presented by the great and gracious Intercessor. Him will God accept. Coming in his name, we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. The spirit which is congenial with the gospel-dispensation is not that of bondage, that we should be held in slavish fear, but that of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father; and, if we do not actually possess it, it is because we are wanting to ourselves. A promise is left us of entering into rest, of which if we seem to come short, it is owing to unbelief. Did we but act up to our privileges, guilt would not lie rankling on our consciences in the manner it often does, nor would care corrode our peace, nor morbid melancholy eat up our enjoyments. Having God for our father, we should confess our sins to him, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son would cleanse us from all sin; we should cast all our care on him who careth for us; we should be inordinately careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God; and the effect would be, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, would keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

2. *Access to all the ordinances of God's house, and to the fellowship of his people.* From being *strangers and foreigners*, we become *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* The church of God is here described as a *city*, and as a *household.* As a city, God is a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her, blessing her provision, and satisfying her poor with bread. To be made free of this city, is no small favour.

As a household, God is the father of it; and as many as receive Christ receive power to become its members, and to share in all the privileges of the family. There are believers, no doubt, whose situation does not admit of these social advantages, and others who are prevented, by something amiss in the state of their own minds, from embracing them; but such do not excel in spirituality or in usefulness. It is as being planted in the house of the Lord, that we may hope to flourish in the courts of our God.

3. *A part in the first resurrection.* The resurrection of the saints is called *the manifestation of the sons of God; the glorious liberty of the children of God; the adoption; the redemption of our body* It is the grand jubilee of the church, and even of the creation. Till then, the former, as well as the latter, will be held under a degree of bondage, as being yet subject to the effects of sin: but then Christ's promise shall be fulfilled, *I will raise them up at the last day;* and the deliverance of the saints will be the signal for that of the creation, which, during the apostasy, has been *unwillingly compelled* to subserve its Creator's enemies, and which is, therefore, represented as waiting for, and earnestly expecting, the moment of deliverance. The last enemy being then destroyed, the war will be ended: death will be swallowed up in victory.

4. *An interest in the eternal inheritance.* The natural inference from this divine relation is this: *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* With such thoughts our minds are overwhelmed; and no wonder, for an inspired Apostle had no adequate conception of it. *Beloved*, says he, *now are we the sons of God; and it* DOTH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE: *but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Such are the leading privileges included in the power of becoming the sons of God; which are sufficient to show, that, though many reject the Saviour, yet it is not for want of kindness on his part towards those who accept of him.

III. Let us observe THE WISDOM OF GOD IN RENDERING THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST THE TURNING POINT OF SALVATION. When a

person who neither understands nor believes the gospel-way of salvation, thinks on the subject, it must appear to him a strange thing, that so much should be made of Christ in the New Testament, and of faith in him. He has no conception of it, or of the reason why it should be so. It was thus that the gospel was *unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness;* to them that believed, however, it was *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* There are three things, in particular, in which the wisdom of God appears in this adjustment of things.

1. *It accords with the leading design of God in the gospel;* namely, to *glorify his character and government in the salvation of sinners.* Receiving Christ, as we have seen already, is the corresponding idea to his being *given*, and that which answers to it, as the loops and taches of the tabernacle answered to each other. If the gift of Christ, on God's part, was necessary to secure the honour of his character and government in showing mercy, the receiving of him, on our part, must also be necessary, as belonging to the same proceeding. Without this, the gift would not answer its end. Hence, though God, through the propitiation of his Son, is *just and* a justifier; yet it is of him only that *believeth in Jesus.*

If, instead of receiving Christ as God's free gift, and eternal life with him, we had received favour irrespective of him, God, so far as we can conceive, must have compromised his honour. To show favour to a sinner in the way he wishes, that is, in reward of what he calls his good works, would be consenting to vacate his throne at the desire of a rebel. It would be agreeing not only to pass over his past disobedience, and so to render null and void his own precepts, warnings, and threatenings, but to accept, in future, of just such obedience, and such a degree of it, as it suited his inclination to yield: *Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.*

But, in receiving Christ, we acquiesce in the whole system of salvation by his death, as glorifying the character and government of God; we subscribe to the great evil of sin, and to the justice of our condemnation on account of it; we become of the same mind with Christ, and in our measure, stand affected as he does, toward God and man, and sin and righteousness. That law which *was*

within his heart, is *written* in ours. Thus it is that God and his government are glorified, not only by the gift of Christ to be a sacrifice, but in the reception of him as such, by the believing sinner.

2. *It secures the honours of grace.* If, instead of receiving Christ as God's free gift, and eternal life through him, we had received favour irrespective of him, we should have considered ourselves as having whereof to glory. It would have appeared to us, as it does and must appear to every one that hopes to be saved without an atonement, that the Almighty has no right to expect perfect obedience from imperfect creatures; that there is no such great evil in sin, as that it should deserve everlasting punishment; that, if God were to be strict to mark iniquity, according to the threatenings of the Bible, he would be unjust: and, therefore, that, in showing mercy, he only makes just allowance for the frailties of his creatures, and acts as a good being must needs act. Thus it is that the very idea of grace is excluded, and the sinner feels himself on terms with his Creator. But, in receiving Christ, and salvation through his death, these imaginations are cast down, and all such high thoughts subdued to the obedience of Christ. He that has been disputing with his Maker for a number of years, at once finds the ground sink under him, all his arguments answered, and himself reduced to the character of a supplicant at the feet of his offended Sovereign.

It is as hard a thing for a proud and carnal heart to receive Christ, and salvation by grace through him, as it is to keep the whole law. If, therefore, we expect the good news of the gospel to consist in something more suited to the inclinations, and not merely to the condition of sinners, we shall be disappointed. It is said of a certain character, who some years since was banished from this country, for attempting to revolutionize it, after the example of France, that he was offered a free pardon, if he would only acknowledge his fault and petition the throne; but *he could not do it!* Such is the inability of men to receive the Saviour; and herein consists the damning sin of unbelief.

If our spirit were brought down to our situation as sinners, the most humiliating truths of the gospel, instead of offending us

would appear to be right, and wise, and glorious. We should feel that the dust was our proper place; or rather, if we had our deserts, the pit of perdition. We should consider ourselves as lying at the absolute discretion of God: instead of being stumbled at such an assertion of the divine sovereignty as that addressed to Moses, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*, we should cordially subscribe it, and supplicate mercy only on that principle. And, when we had obtained it, we should never think of having made ourselves to differ, but freely acknowledge, that it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. Our minds would be in perfect unison with the language of the Apostle to Timothy: *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

3. *It provides for the interests of holiness.* In receiving Christ, and salvation through him, we receive a doctrine that strikes at the very root of depravity. *The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil:* he, therefore, that receives him must, from thence, be at variance with them. We are not only justified, but sanctified by the faith that is in him. The doctrine of the cross, while it gives peace to the conscience, purifies the heart. There is not a principle in it, but what, if felt and acted upon, would cause the world to be dead to us, and us unto the world. The objections, therefore, that are made to this doctrine as being unfriendly to holiness, have no foundation in the doctrine itself, whatever may be seen in the lives of some that profess it.

From the whole: *The first concern of the sinner is to receive the Saviour.* It ought to be no question, whether he *may* receive him; since the gospel is addressed to every creature, and its invitations to the *stout-hearted and far from righteousness.* The only question is, whether he be *willing* to receive him. To a spectator unacquainted with the depravity of human nature, it must be beyond measure surprising, that this should be a question; and, indeed, few men can be convinced that it is: yet, if it were not, there would be no difficulty in receiving him. *Why do ye*

not understand my speech? because ye cannot hear my word: that is, because ye are averse from it. But no man will be able to excuse this his aversion, which is itself sin. The Judge of all the earth makes no allowance for it, nor for its not having been removed by divine grace. Grace is never represented in the scriptures as necessary to our accountableness; but as a free gift which God might justly withhold. It is deemed sufficient to justify the condemnation of sinners, that they *were averse* from the gospel and government of Christ: *Take these mine enemies, that* WOULD NOT *that I should reign over them, and slay them before me.*

Should it be objected, that these principles must tend to drive a sinner to despair; I answer, by asking, What sinner? Not him whose desires are toward the Saviour; not him whose prayer is *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:* if any, it must be him who has no desire after God; and, even in his case, the despair is not absolute, but merely on supposition of his continuing in that state of mind. But this, to him, is most necessary; for, till a sinner despair of obtaining mercy in the way he is in, he will never fall at the feet of sovereign grace, and so will never be saved. As he that would be wise must first become a fool, that he may be wise, so he that layeth hold of the hope set before him in the gospel must first relinquish his hope from every other quarter.

SERMON XVII.

ROMANS iii. 24.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

THE doctrine expressed in this passage runs through the Epistle and constitutes the scope of it. It is taught in many other parts of scripture, but here it is established by a connected body of evidence. Both heathens and Jews are proved to be under sin, and, consequently, incapable of being justified by a righteous God, on the ground of their own obedience. As to the former, they were wicked in the extreme. If any thing could have been alleged in excuse of them, it had been their *ignorance;* but even this failed. They had means of knowledge sufficient to render them *without excuse;* but, having neglected them, and cast off God, God gave them up to their own corrupt affections and propensities; so that even the philosophic Greeks and Romans were *full of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, holding*, or rather withholding, *the truth*, which they understood above the common people, *in unrighteousness.* 'But if heathens could not be justified yet did not they who had the oracles of God stand on higher ground?' Not so; for those very oracles describe men as *all*

gone out of the way, as having become *unprofitable*, as none of them *doing good, no, not one;* and what revelation says, it says of them who are under the light of it. Israel, therefore, was a part of the corrupt mass. The sum is, *Every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.—By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified in his sight.*

These sentiments, contained in the first three chapters of the Epistle, make way for the following interesting statement: *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.*

I call this an *interesting* statement; for of all the questions that can occupy the human mind, there is none of greater importance than that which relates to the way of acceptance with God. We learn from our own consciences, as well as from the scriptures, that we are accountable creatures; but how we shall stand before the holy Lord God, is a question that overwhelms us. If there were no hope from the gospel, we must despair. We must appear before the judgment-seat, but it would be only to be convicted and condemned. The doctrine, therefore, that shows a way in which God can be just, and yet a justifier, must be interesting beyond expression. This is, in substance, the good news to be proclaimed to every creature.

Justification by grace has been thought, by some, to be inconsistent with justification through the atonement and righteousness of Christ. Yet it is here expressly said to be of grace; and, as though that were not enough, *freely* by grace: nor is the sacred writer less express concerning its meritorious cause, than concern-

ing its source, or origin : it was not only of free grace, but *through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.*

In every kind of justification in which justice is regarded, there is some ground, or reason, for the proceeding. In ordinary cases among men, this ground, or reason, is found in the character of the prisoner. He is considered as innocent, and therefore is acquitted. In the justification of a sinner by the Judge of all, it is *the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.* That which innocence is to the one, the redemption of Christ is to the other : it is his *righteousness*, or that in consideration of which being imputed to him, he is justified.

In discoursing upon this great subject, I shall endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the term ; to give proof of the doctrine and to show the consistency of its being of free grace, and yet through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO ASCERTAIN THE MEANING OF THE TERM JUSTIFICATION. Many errors on this important subject may be expected to have arisen from the want of a clear view of the thing itself. Till we understand what justification is, we cannot affirm or deny any thing concerning it, but with great uncertainty.

It is not the making a person righteous by an inherent change from sin to righteousness : this is *sanctification ;* which, though no less necessary than the other, yet is distinguished from it : Christ *is made unto us righteousness* AND *sanctification.* The term is forensic, referring to the proceedings in a court of judicature, and stands opposed to *condemnation.* This is evident from many passages of scripture, particularly the following : *He that* JUSTIFIETH *the wicked, and he that* CONDEMNETH *the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.—The judgment was by one to* CONDEMNATION ; *but the free gift is of many offences unto* JUSTIFICATION.—*There is therefore now no* CONDEMNATION *to them that are in Christ Jesus.—It is God that* JUSTIFIETH : *who is he that* CONDEMNETH ?—*He that—believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into* CONDEMNATION ; *but is passed from death unto life.* If a prisoner who stands charged with a crime be convicted of it, he is *condemned :* if otherwise, he is acquitted or *justified.*

But, though it be true that the term is forensic, and stands opposed to condemnation, yet, as in most other instances in which the proceedings of God allude to those of men, they are *not, in all respects, alike.* He that is justified in an earthly court, (unless it be for want of evidence, which cannot possibly apply in this case,) is considered as being really innocent; and his justification is no other than an act of justice done to him. He is acquitted because he appears to deserve acquittal. This, however, is not the justification of the gospel, which is *of grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ.* Justification in the first case, in proportion as it confers honour on the justified, reflects dishonour on his accusers; while, in the last, the justice of every charge is admitted, and no dishonour reflected on any party, except himself. Justification among men is opposed not only to condemnation, but even to *pardon;* for, in order to this, the prisoner must be found guilty, whereas, in justification, he is acquitted as innocent. But gospel justification, though distinguishable from pardon, yet is not opposed to it. On the contrary, pardon is an essential branch of it. Pardon, it is true, only removes the curse due to sin, while justification confers the blessing of eternal life; but, without the former, we could not possess the latter. He that is justified requires to be pardoned, and he that is pardoned is also justified. Hence, a blessing is pronounced on him whose iniquities are forgiven, hence also, the Apostle argues from the non imputation of sin to the imputation of righteousness; considering the blessedness of him to whom God imputeth not sin, as a description of the blessedness of him to whom he imputeth righteousness without works. Finally: justification at a human bar, *prevents* condemnation; but gospel-justification finds the sinner under condemnation, and delivers him from it. It is described as *passing from death to life.*

From these dissimilarities, and others which, I doubt not, might be pointed out, it must be evident, to every thinking mind, that, though there are certain points of likeness, sufficient to account for the use of the term, yet we are not to learn the scripture doctrine of justification from what is so called in the judicial proceedings of human courts, and in various particulars, cannot safe-

ly reason from one to the other. The principal points of likeness respect not the *grounds* of the proceeding, but the effects of it. Believing in Jesus we are united to him; and, being so, are treated by the judge of all as one with him; his obedience unto death is imputed to us, or reckoned as ours: and we, for his sake, are delivered from condemnation, as though we had been innocent, and entitled to eternal life, as though we had been perfectly obedient.

But let us farther inquire, *What is gospel-justification?* Alluding to justification in a court of judicature, it has been common to speak of it as a *sentence.* This sentence has been considered, by some divines, as passing—first, in the mind of God from eternity; secondly, on Christ and the elect considered in him when he rose from the dead; thirdly, in the conscience of a sinner on his believing. Justification by faith, in the view of these divines, denotes either justification by Christ the object of faith, or the manifestation to the soul of what previously existed in the mind of God.

Others, who have been far from holding with justification as a decree in the divine mind, have yet seemed to consider it as a manifestation, impression, or persuasion in the human mind. They have spoken of themselves and others, as being justified under such a sermon, or at such an hour: when all that they appear to mean is, that at such a time they had a strong impression, or persuasion, that they were justified.

In respect of the first of these statements, it is true, that justification, and every other spiritual blessing, was included in that *purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;* but, as the *actual bestowment* of other blessings supposes the existence of the party, so does justification. Christ was *raised again* FOR *our justification*, in the same sense as he died for the pardon of our sins. Pardon and justification were virtually obtained by his death and resurrection; and to this may be added, our glorification was obtained by his ascension; for we were not only *quickened together with him, and raised up together, but made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* But as this does not prove, that we were, from thence, actually glo-

rified, neither do the other prove that we were actually pardoned, or justified.

Whatever justification be, the scriptures represent it as taking place on our *believing* in Christ. It is not any thing that belongs to *predestination*, but something that intervenes between that and glorification. *Whom he did* PREDESTINATE, *them he also called: and whom he called, them he also* JUSTIFIED: *and whom he justified, them he also* GLORIFIED. That which the scriptures call justification, is by faith in Jesus Christ; and is sometimes spoken of as future, which it could not be, if it were before our actual existence. For example: *Seeing it is one God which* SHALL *justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.—Now it was not written for Abraham's sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it* SHALL *be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.—The scripture* FORESEEING *that God* WOULD *justify the heathen through faith*, &c. If justification were God's decree finally to acquit, condemnation must be his decree finally to condemn. But every unbeliever, whether elect or non-elect, is under condemnation, as the scriptures abundantly teach: condemnation, therefore, cannot be God's decree finally to condemn. Saul of Tarsus, while an unbeliever, was under condemnation, yet God had not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. The sum is, that neither condemnation nor justification consists in the secret purpose of God, but in his will, as revealed or declared, as by a sentence in open court.

And, as justification is not a purpose in the divine mind, neither is it *a manifestation to, an impression on*, or *a persuasion of, the human mind.* That there are *manifestations* to believers is admitted. God *manifests* himself unto them, as he does not unto the world. The things of God, which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are *revealed* to them. But these are not things which were previously locked up in the divine purposes, but things which are already revealed in the scriptures, and which were previously hidden from them, as they still are from unbelievers, by their own criminal blindness. God does not reveal his secret counsels to men, otherwise than by fulfilling them. To pretend

to a revelation, or manifestation, of that which is not contained in the scriptures, is pretending to be inspired in the same extraordinary manner as were the prophets and apostles.

If justification consist in a manifestation, impression, or persuasion, that we are justified, condemnation must be a like impression, or persuasion, that we are condemned : but this is not true. The Jews who opposed Christ were under condemnation ; yet, so far from being impressed, or persuaded, of any such thing, they had no doubt but God was their father. Believers in Jesus, on the other hand, may, at times, be impressed with strong apprehensions of divine wrath, while yet they are not exposed to it. Neither justification, therefore, nor condemnation, consists in a persuasion of the mind that we are under the one or the other. Besides, to make a thing consist in a persuasion of the truth of that thing, is a palpable absurdity. There can be no well grounded persuasion of the truth of any thing, unless it be true and evident, antecedently to our being persuaded of it.

Justification is a relative change, not *in*, or *upon* but *concerning* us. It relates to our standing with respect to God, the law-giver and judge of all. It is *passing from death to life*, in respect of the law : as when the sentence against a malefactor is not only remitted, but he is, withal, raised to honour and dignity. It is our standing acquitted by the *revealed will of God declared in the gospel.* As *the wrath of God is* REVEALED *from heaven* in the curses of his law ; so *the righteousness of God is* REVEALED *from faith to faith*, in the declarations of the gospel. It is in this *revelation* of the mind of God in his word, I conceive, that the *sentence* both of condemnation and justification consists. He whom the scriptures bless is blessed ; and he whom they curse is cursed.

As transgressors of the holy, just, and good law of God, we are all, by nature, children of wrath. All the threatenings of God are in full force against us, and, were we to die in that condition, we must perish everlastingly. This is to be under *condemnation.* But condemnation, awful as it is, is not damnation. The sentence is not executed, nor is it irrevocable : *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that* WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. From hence,

the sinner stands in a new relation to God as a law-giver. He is no longer *under the law*, with respect to its condemning power, but *under grace*. As the manslayer, on having entered the city of refuge, was, by a special constitution of mercy, secure from the avenger of blood ; so the sinner, having *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him*, is, by the gracious constitution of the gospel, secured from the curse. All those threatenings which belonged to him heretofore, no longer stand against him ; but are reckoned, by the Judge of all, as having been executed on Jesus his substitute, who was *made a curse for us*. On the other hand, all the blessings and promises in the book of God belong to him, and, die when he may, eternal life is his portion. This is that state into which every believer is translated, on his becoming a believer; and herein, I conceive, consists the blessing of justification.

There are a few points pertaining to the subject, which yet require illustration, namely, What it is in the redemption of Christ to which the scriptures ascribe its *efficacy?* What is the concern of *faith* in justification ; and why it is ascribed to this grace, rather than to any other ? Finally, Whether justification includes the pardon of our sins, *past, present, and to come?*

1. Let us inquire, *What it is, in the redemption of Christ, to which the scriptures ascribe its* EFFICACY ? Justification is ascribed to his *blood*, and to his *obedience*. By the blood of Christ, is meant the shedding of his blood, or the laying down of his life, and by his obedience, all that conformity to the will of God which led to this great crisis. He was *obedient unto death*. By the death of Christ sin is said to be *purged*, or *expiated;* and sinners, to be *redeemed*, *reconciled*, and *cleansed from all sin ;* and by his obedience many are said to be *made righteous*. This his obedience unto death was more than the *means* of salvation : it was the *procuring cause* of it. Salvation was the effect of the *travail of his soul*. We may be instruments in saving one another ; but Christ was *the* AUTHOR *of eternal salvation.** The principle of substitu-

* The redemption of Christ may, indeed, be considered as a *mean* or *medium*, in respect of the *first cause*. Thus, in the text, it stands distinguished from grace : *that* is the source whence it sprang; *this* the medium through which it flows. The redemption of Christ is not the *cause* of the Father's grace ; but that in *consideration* of which it is exercised.

tion, or of one standing in the place of others, being admitted by the Sovereign of the universe, he endured that which, *in its effect on the divine government, was equivalent to the everlasting punishment of a world;* and did that which *it was worthy of God to reward with eternal glory, not only on himself, but on all those on whose behalf he should intercede.* What is there, then, in this his obedience unto death, that should render it capable of producing such important effects? To this question the scriptures make answer, as follows: We are *redeemed—with the precious blood of Christ.* —*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son* CLEANSETH *us from all sin.*— *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had* BY HIMSELF expiated *our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* If there be any meaning in language, the efficacy of the sufferings and work of Christ is here ascribed to the dignity of his person; and that dignity amounts to nothing short of his proper Deity. The scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, the strength by which he was borne up in his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father: for, being *in the form of a servant*, it was fit that he should be supplied, and supported, and vindicated, by HIM whose servant he was; but when the *value* or *virtue*, of his interposition is spoken of, it is ascribed to the intrinsic glory of his person, as the Son of God. We inquire,

2. *What is the concern of* FAITH *in justification, and why it is ascribed to this grace, rather than to any other?* Were we to conceive of the gospel as a new "remedial law," and of faith as the first principle of obedience constituting the condition of it, or that which God graciously consented to accept as the term of justification, instead of a perfect conformity to the old law, we should be greatly beside the gospel-plan. The gospel-plan of justification excludes *boasting*, and that as excluding *works:* but justification, on this principle, excludes not works, but merely works of a certain description. There *is*, on this principle, a law that can give life; and righteousness, after all, is by law. If we are justified by any doings of our own, whatever they are, we have *whereof to glory.* Whether we call them legal or evangelical, if they be the

consideration on which we are forgiven and accepted, we are not justified *freely by grace*, and boasting is not excluded.

It is said to be *of faith, that it might be by grace.* There must, therefore, be something in the nature of faith which peculiarly corresponds with the free grace of the gospel; something which looks out of self, and receives the free gifts of heaven as being what they are—pure, undeserved favour. We need not reduce it to a mere exercise of the intellectual faculty, in which there is nothing holy; but, whatever holiness there is in it, it is not this, but the obedience of Christ, that constitutes our justifying righteousness. Whatever other properties the magnet may possess, it is as pointing invariably to the north that it guides the mariner; and, whatever other properties faith may possess, it is as receiving Christ, and bringing us into union with him, that it justifies.

In order to be interested in justification, and other blessings arising from the obedience and death of Christ, we must first be interested in *Christ himself:* for it is as *having the Son*, that we *have everlasting life.* The benefits of Christ's obedience unto death require to be received in the same order as that in which they are given. As God first *gives* HIM, so we must first *receive* HIM, and, with him, *all things freely.* Many would wish for the benefits of Christ's death, who yet have no desire after Christ. Like him that was nearest of kin to the family of Elimelech, they would, on various accounts, be pleased with the inheritance; but when it is understood, that, in order to possess it they must take *him*, with all that pertains to him, and that this would mar their present inheritance, they give it up.

Thus it is, that justification is ascribed to faith, because it is by faith that we receive Christ; and, thus it is by *faith only*, and not by any other grace. Faith is peculiarly a *receiving* grace, which none other is. Were we said to be justified by repentance, by love, or by any other grace, it would convey to us the idea of something good in us being the *consideration* on which the blessing was bestowed; but justification by faith conveys no such idea. On the contrary, it leads the mind directly to Christ, in the same manner as saying of a person that he lives by *begging*, leads to the idea of his living on *what he freely receives.*

It is thus that justification stands connected, in the scriptures, with *union* with Christ: *Of him are ye* IN *Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—righteousness.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are* IN *Christ Jesus.—That I may be found* IN *him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* From these and other passages, we perceive, that faith justifies, not in a way of merit, not on account of any thing in itself, be it what it may, but as uniting us to Christ. It is that which the act of marriage is on the part of a female: by it, she becomes one with her husband, and, (whatever might be her former poverty,) legally interested in all that he possesses. Having him, she has all that is his. Thus it is that, Christ being *heir of all things*, believers in him become *heirs of God*, not in their own right, but as *joint-heirs with him.* And as, in a marriage union, the wealth which an indigent female might derive from the opulence of her husband would not be in *reward* of her having received him, so neither is justification the reward of faith, but of the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Great things are ascribed to faith, in a way of *healing*. Many of the miraculous cures performed by our Lord are ascribed to the faith of the parties. The *virtue*, however, proceeded not from faith, but from him. It is the same in justification. By faith we receive the benefit; but the benefit arises not from faith, but from Christ. Hence, the same thing which is ascribed, in some places, to faith, is, in others, ascribed to the obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ.

3. We inquire, *Whether justification includes the pardon of our sins, past, present, and to come?* That it includes the pardon of sin has been proved already from Rom. iv. 6, 7; and, seeing it is promised, of him that believeth, that he *shall not come into condemnation*, it must, in some way, secure the pardon of all his sins, and the possession of eternal life. Yet, to speak of sins as being pardoned before they are repented of, or even committed, is not only to maintain that on which the scriptures are silent, but to contradict the current language of their testimony. If all our sins, past, present, and to come, were *actually* forgiven, either when

Christ laid down his life, or even on our first believing, why did David speak of *confessing his transgression*, and of God *forgiving his iniquity?* Why did Solomon teach us, that *He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy?* Why did our Lord direct us, in our daily prayers, to say, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:* and why add, *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses?* Finally, why did the apostle John teach us, that, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Nor is it sufficient to understand this language of the *manifestation* of forgiveness to the mind. Forgiveness is not opposed to merely withholding the comforts of religion, but to *laying our sins to our charge.* The parable of the servant who took his fellow-servant by the throat, and was delivered by his lord to the tormentors, is thus applied by our Lord. So *likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* This, undoubtedly, means more than withholding a sense of forgiveness in the present life. Nor is there any thing in all this inconsistent with the certain perseverance of true believers, or with the promise that they *shall not come into condemnation.* The truth taught us in this promise is not, that, if, after believing in Christ, we live in sin, and die without repentance, we shall, nevertheless escape condemnation; but, that provision is made, on behalf of believers, that they shall *not live in sin:* and, when they sin, that they shall *not die without repentance*, but return to God, and so obtain forgiveness. The promise of non-condemnation includes that of repentance and perseverance: *I will put my law in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.*

We may think, that, if the Lord has appointed us to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, whatever be our conduct, he will never threaten us with any thing beyond a severe chastisement: but Christ did not act in this manner towards his disciples. He not only gave the unforgiving to expect no forgiveness at the hand of God, but enforced the giving up of that which *caused them to offend*, though it were as dear as a right hand or a right eye, on pain

of being *cast into hell-fire!* He allowed no one, while in an evil course, to take it for granted, that he was, nevertheless, a good man; but pointed him to the end whither that course, if persisted in, would lead him. Warnings are as necessary, in some circumstances, as encouragements are in others: and their being enforced on pain of eternal destruction, may be the appointed means of saving us from it.

SERMON XVIII.

ROMANS iii. 24.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

HAVING shown what I conceive to be meant by justification, I proceed to the next head of discourse; namely,

II. TO OFFER EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE DOCTRINE: OR, TO PROVE, THAT WE ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY ANY WORKS OF OUR OWN, BUT OF FREE GRACE, THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. There are but two ways in which creatures can be justified before God: one is by works, the other by grace. If we had been obedient to the holy, just, and good law of our Creator, that obedience would have been our *righteousness*, and we should have been justified on the ground of it: for *the man that doeth those things shall live by them.* But, having all sinned, we have come short of the glory of God. Instead of gaining his favour, we stand exposed to his righteous curse; for thus it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.*

We need not, on this subject, inquire into the degrees of evil, or whether we have gone greater lengths in sin than other men;

for if we had only broken *one* of God's righteous commandments, that were an everlasting bar to our justification. As well might a murderer plead in arrest of judgment, that he had killed only *one* man. The number of our sins will, doubtless heighten the degrees of punishment ; but it is the nature of them that insures condemnation. Nor does this disprove the equity of the law : for we cannot break a single precept without contemning the divine authority ; which at once destroys the principle of obedience to every other. We may not actually go into all other sins: but it is not *the love of God* that restrains us ; it is interest or fear, or regard to our own reputation that holds us back. On this principle, he who offendeth but in one point, is said to be guilty of all : *For* HE THAT SAID, *Do not commit adultery ; said also do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.* But, if a single offence be an everlasting bar to justification by our own works, what ground can there be to hope for it, when our whole lives have been one continued series of revolt ?

We are all transgressors, and, as such, under the curse. Here too, we might have been left to perish. God was not obliged, in justice or in honour, to interpose in behalf of a seed of evil doers. The law by which we stand condemned, being *holy, just, and good*, might have been executed, and no reproach would have attached to the divine character. Having sided with Satan against God, we might justly have had our portion with him and his angels. All who were not themselves implicated, and disaffected to the divine government, would have said, *True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord.* And we ourselves, at the last judgment, should not have been able to open our mouths against it.

And, now that *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins*, has interposed, and revealed a way in which he can be *just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*, shall it be objected to by us ? Shall man, lying as he does under the dominion of sin, and the righteous condemnation of heaven on account of it, shall man take state to himself, and be ever aspiring to be justified on the ground of, at

least, his comparative righteousness? Such, however, is the fact. When the first-born son of fallen Adam brought his offering, he came as though he had never sinned; bringing no sacrifice, and yet entertaining high expectations of success. Hence, when the signal of acceptance was withheld, his countenance fell. Thus it is that millions are bringing their offerings to this day, overlooking *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.* All the false religions that have existed, or do now exist, in the world are so many modifications of a self-righteous spirit; so many devices to appease the conscience, and propitiate the Deity.

Nor is it confined to heathens, Mahometans, and Jews: there are professing Christians who are very explicit in avowing their dependence upon their own works.* Where the divinity and atonement of Christ are disavowed, this is no more than may be expected. But neither is it confined to such. Many who profess to believe these doctrines, yet seem to consider the grand object of the death of Christ to have been, that he might obtain for us, that repentance, faith, and sincere obedience should be accepted as the ground of justification, instead of sinless perfection.†

Many who, in consequence of being educated under a gospel ministry, disavow, in words, all dependence on their own works,

* "When will Christians permit themselves to believe, that the same conduct which gains them the approbation of good men here, will secure the favour of heaven hereafter?" Mrs. BARBAULD.

"Repentance and a good life are of themselves sufficient to recommend us to the divine favour." Dr. PRIESTLEY.

"The practice of virtue is always represented as the *only means* of attaining happiness, both here and hereafter." Mr. BELSHAM.

† This seems to be the idea of Bishop BUTLER. "The doctrine of the gospel," he says, "appears to be, not only that Christ taught the efficacy of repentance; but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us; that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life: not only that he revealed to sinners that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but, moreover, that he put them into this capacity of salvation, by what he did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness." Analogy, Part II. Chap. 5. p. 305.—Christ, it seems, was no otherwise our *Saviour*, than as enabling us to save ourselves!

are, nevertheless, manifestly under the influence of a self-righteous spirit. They do not confess their faults one to another, but justify themselves, as far as possible, and, wherein they fail in this, will invent so many pleas and excuses, as shall extenuate the sin to little or nothing. They are not self-diffident, nor humble, but the contrary; trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others, just as the Pharisee did the publican. They *thank God* for being what they are; and so did the Pharisee: but, as words in the one case signified nothing, neither do they in the other.

To this may be added, It is not an unusual thing for those who have been awakened to a serious concern about salvation to overlook the Saviour, and to build their hopes on the consideration of the *tears they have shed*, *the prayers they have offered*, and *the pains they have taken* in religion. But, if it should prove, that all confidences of this sort are only a refined species of self-righteous hope, and that the first substantial relief of a sinner arises from a belief of the gospel-way of salvation, the consequences may be no less fatal than if they had never wept, nor prayed, nor taken any pains in religion.

One thing is certain: we must be justified wholly of grace, or wholly of works: for there is no medium: *If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if*, on the other hand, *it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work.* Taking it for granted, that what God has revealed in his word is the only sure ground on which to rest a matter of such high importance, I shall state what appears to me the scripture evidence for the first of these methods of justification under the following particulars:

1. *The righteousness of God does not admit a sinner's being justified on the ground of his own doings.* It belongs to the righteousness, or justice, of God to do justice to his own character. But to pardon and accept of sinners, on account of any thing done by them, were to fly in the face of his own law and government, which, if any thing could cause both them and him to be treated with contempt, this proceeding must do. *It* BECAME HIM, *for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto*

glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—Whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his RIGHTEOUSNESS *for the remission of sins.—For they being ignorant of God's* RIGHTEOUSNESS, *and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* If these passages do not convey the idea of its being inconsistent with the righteous character of God to pardon and accept of sinners, in consideration of their own doings, I can conceive of no determinate idea conveyed by them. If it was *becoming* the divine perfections, to bring sinners to glory through a suffering Saviour, it would have been unbecoming those perfections to have brought them to glory in virtue of their own doings. If Christ were set forth to be a propitiation that God might declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, his righteousness would not have been declared in the remission of sins without it. Finally: If ignorance of God's righteousness were the reason of the non-submission of the Jews to the gospel-way of justification, there must have been, in that truth, something directly opposed to justification in any other way, and which, had it been properly understood, would have cut up all hopes from every other quarter. It was in this way that Paul, when the righteous law of God appeared to him in its true light, *died* as to all hopes of being accepted of God by the works of it. It was *through the law* that he became *dead to the law*, that he might live unto God.

2. *The scriptures, in a great variety of language, exclude all works performed by sinful creatures as the ground of acceptance with God.* In proof of this, the following passages are very express: *Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man that doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,—If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.—Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.—If Abraham were*

justified by works, he hath whereof to glory.—Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.—Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.—Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.—As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but The man that doeth them shall live in them.—Christ is become of no effect unto you: whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.—Not of works, lest any man should boast.—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Distinctions have been made, on this subject, between the works of the *ceremonial* and those of the *moral* law, also between the works of the *law* and those of the *gospel;* as though it were not the design of the scriptures to exclude moral duties from being grounds of justification, but merely those which are ceremonial; or if it were, yet not the evangelical duties of repentance, faith, and sincere obedience. But, whatever differences there may be between these things, they are all *works;* and all works of men are excluded from justification. If the foregoing passages be considered in their connexions, they will be found to respect all obedience, of every kind, which is performed by men, be it ceremonial or moral, or what it may. They teach justification by a righteousness *received,* in opposition to a righteousness *done* or *performed,* and which leaves no

room for boasting. If we were justified by faith itself, considered as a duty of ours, or if the Law-giver had respect to any conformity to God in us, as the cause, or reason, of the sentence, there would be no meaning in such language as this: *To him that* WORKETH NOT, *but* BELIEVETH *on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

The language of the Apostle to the Galatians goes not only to exclude obedience to the ceremonial and the moral law, but *obedience to law in general*, as the ground of justification. The reason given why the law is not against the promises, or why it cannot furnish an objection to the free grace of the gospel, is this: *If there had been* A LAW *which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.* This is equal to saying, the patient was given up, as incurable by law, before the promised grace of the gospel took him in hand: whatever, therefore, is done by the latter cannot be objected to by the former. The terms νόμος and ἐκ νόμου, *law*, and *by the law*, in Gal. iii. 21, as observed by Dr. Guyse, show it, according to Mr. Locke's rule of interpretation, to relate to law in general, or to any or every law. But, if the works of every law be excluded, all distinctions between ceremonial and moral, or between moral and evangelical, are of no account.

3. *Being justified freely by grace is itself directly opposed to being justified by works.* The term *grace* denotes *free favour to the unworthy.* If God had been obliged, in justice or in honour, to have done what he has done; if the law by which we were condemned were too strict, or the penalty annexed to it too severe; if Christ, and the offer of salvation through him, were a compensation given us on account of the injury we received from our connexion with our first parents, that which is called grace, would not be grace, but debt. There is just so much grace in the gospel as there is justice in the law, and no more. The opposition between grace and works, in this important concern, is so clear in itself, and so plainly marked by the apostle, that one can scarcely conceive, how it can be honestly mistaken: *If it be by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.*

But, strong as the term *grace* is, the Apostle adds to its force. As though it were not enough for him to affirm, that we are justi-

fied by grace, he says, we are justified *freely* by his grace. There is, doubtless, a redundancy in the expression; but the design of it is to strengthen the thought. Thus, when he would forcibly express his idea of future glory, he uses a kind of tautology for the purpose, calling it a FAR MORE EXCEEDING *and eternal weight of glory*. We are not only justified without any desert, on our part, but contrary to it. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts, in the forgiveness of sin, higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways. They who are justified are said to receive *abundance of grace*, or grace abounding over all the aboundings of sin. Sin reigns over our species, subjugating them all to death: but grace conquers the conqueror, reigning through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. *The terms used relative to gospel-justification, render it evident, that it is not our own righteousness that is imputed to us, but the righteousness of another. Abraham believed God, and it was* COUNTED *unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But he that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is* COUNTED *for righteousness.—David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God* IMPUTETH *righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not* IMPUTE *sin.* The terms *imputed* and *counted*, in this connexion, are manifestly used to express, not that just reckoning of righteousness to the righteous, which gives to every man his due, but that gracious reckoning of righteousness to the unrighteous, as though he were righteous. When the uncircumcised Gentile kept the law, his uncircumcision was *counted* for circumcision: not that it really was such, but was graciously reckoned, in the divine administration, as if it were. When Paul, writing to Philomon concerning Onesimus, says, *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account*, he did not mean, that he should treat him according to his deserts, but that he should forgive and accept him, for his sake.

When *faith* is said to be counted for righteousness, it is as relating to Christ. The faith by which Abraham was justified had

immediate relation to him as the promised seed; and it is easy to perceive, in the New Testament accounts of justifying faith, a marked attention to the same thing. Abraham believed God, and *it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.*—BY HIM *all that believe are justified from all things.—That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* "It is evident," says President Edwards,* "that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by that expression, *It is counted, or imputed, to him for righteousness.* The phrase, as the Apostle uses it here, (Rom. iv. 5.) and in the context, manifestly imports, that God, of his sovereign grace, is pleased, in his dealings with the sinner, to take and regard that which, indeed is not righteousness, and in one that has no righteousness, so that the consequence shall be the same as if he had righteousness; and which may be from the respect that it bears to something which is indeed righteous. It is as if he had said "*As to him that works*, there is no need of any gracious *reckoning*, or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness: for if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs.'"

5. *The rewards promised, in the scriptures, to good works, suppose the parties to be believers in Christ; and so, being accepted in him, their works also are accepted, and rewarded, for his sake.* That good works have the promise of salvation, is beyond dispute. Nothing that God approves shall go unrewarded. The least expression of faith and love, even the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, *because he belongs to him*, will insure everlasting life. But neither this, nor any other good work, can be a ground of justification, inasmuch as it is *subsequent* to it. For works to have any influence on this blessing, they require to precede it: but works before faith are never acknowledged by the scriptures

* Sermon on Justification, p. 9.

to be good. It was testified of Enoch, that he *pleased God;* from whence the apostle to the Hebrews infers, that he was a believer, inasmuch as *without faith it is impossible to please God.* "It does not consist with the honour of the Majesty of the King of heaven and earth, to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law till that condemnation be removed."* The Lord had respect *first to Abel*, and *then to his offering.* Even those works which are the expressions of faith and love, have so much sinful imperfection attached to them, that they require to be presented by an intercessor on our behalf. The most spiritual sacrifices are no otherwise acceptable to God than by *Jesus Christ.*

Perhaps I ought not to conclude this part of the subject without noticing the apparent opposition between Paul and James; the one teaching that we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; the other, that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. The words are, doubtless, apparently opposite; and so are those of Solomon, when he directs us, in one proverb, *not* to answer, and, in the next, to *answer* a fool according to his folly. In reconciling these apparently opposite counsels, we are led, by the reasons given for each, to understand the terms as used in different senses; the first, as directing us not to answer a fool *in a foolish manner*, for this would make us *like unto him;* the last, to answer him *in a way suited to expose his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.* In like manner, the terms *faith* and *justification* were used by Paul and James in a different sense. By faith, Paul meant that which worketh by love, and is productive of good fruits; but James speaks of a faith which is *dead, being alone.* By justification, Paul means the acceptance of a sinner before God; but James refers to his being approved of God as a true Christian. "Both these apostles bring the case of Abraham in illustration of their principles; but then, it is to be observed, they refer to different periods and circumstances in the life of that patriarch. Paul, in the first instance, says of Abraham, that he was justified by faith, while yet uncircumcised: this was his justification in *the*

* President Edwards's Sermon on Justification.

sight of God, and was without any consideration of his works. James refers to a period some years subsequent to this, when. in the offering up of his son, he was justified by works also; that is, his faith was shown to be genuine by its fruits. Paul therefore refers to the acceptance of a sinner; James to the approbation of a saint."*

Supported by this body of scripture-evidence, as well as by the experience we have had of the holy and happy influence of the doctrine, I trust we shall continue unmoved in our adherence to it. Let others boast of the efficacy of their own virtues, we, with the Apostle, will count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; will count all things but dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

* The word 'Justification' is used in this sense, Matt. xii. 37. 1 Cor. iv. 4. See Williams' Vindication against Belsham, pp. 145, 146.

SERMON XIX.

ROMANS iii. 24.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

HAVING endeavoured to explain and establish the doctrine of justification, it remains for me,

III. TO SHOW THE CONSISTENCY OF ITS BEING OF FREE GRACE, AND YET THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. This is a subject of the last importance. Almost every thing pertaining to the way of salvation is affected by it. The principal reason alleged by those who reject the doctrine of atonement is, its inconsistency with grace. God needed nothing, they say, but his own goodness, to induce him to show mercy; or if he did, it is not of grace, seeing a price is paid to obtain it. The question, however, does not respect the first moving cause of mercy, but the manner of showing it. The friends of the doctrine of atonement allow that the sacrifice of Christ was not the cause, but the effect, of the Father's love. They do not scruple to admit, that his love was sufficient to have pardoned sinners without an atonement, provided it had been consistent with the righteousness of his character and government. "It is not the *sentiment*, but the *expression* of love" that requires an atonement. David was not wanting in love to his son Absalom; for *his soul longed to go forth* to him; but he felt

for his honour, as the head of a family and of a nation, which, had he admitted him immediately into his presence, would have been compromised, and the crime of murder connived at. Hence, for a time, he must be kept at a distance, and, when introduced, it must be by a mediator. This statement, which has been made, in substance, by our writers repeatedly, has seldom, if ever, been fairly met by writers on the other side. I never recollect, however, to have seen or heard any thing like a fair answer to it.

It is remarkable too, that those who make this objection never appear to regard the doctrine of grace, but for the purpose of making void the atonement. On all other occasions, grace is virtually disowned, and works are every thing ; but here it is magnified, in much the same manner as the Father is honoured, as the object of worship, to the exclusion of the Son.

Cases may be supposed, I acknowledge, in which the ideas of grace and atonement would be inconsistent. First: *If the atonement were made by the offender, himself enduring the full penalty of the law*, his deliverance would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. But, as in a case of murder, it is not in the sinner's power to make atonement for himself, so as to survive his punishment. The punishment threatened against sin is everlasting, which admits of no period when the penalty shall have been endured. No man, therefore, can, by any length of suffering, redeem his own soul.

Secondly : *If the sufferings of another could avail for the offender, and he himself were to provide the substitute*, his deliverance might be a matter of right, and there might be no grace in it. But neither of these suppositions can exist in the case before us. Strict distributive justice could not admit of the innocent suffering for the guilty, even though the innocent were willing. Its language is, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.* But, if it could, the guilty party could not find a substitute either able or willing to stand in his place.

Thirdly : *If God himself should both consent to accept of a substitute and actually provide one, yet if the acts and deeds of sinners be considered as literally becoming his, and his theirs, whatever grace there might be in the acceptance and provision of the*

substitute, there would be no place for the FORGIVENESS *of the sinner, and justification would be merely an act of Justice.* If Christ, in having our sins imputed to him, became a sinner, and, as some have said, the greatest of all sinners, then, in his sufferings, he was only treated according to his desert: and that desert, belonging to him could no longer belong to us: so that, had we been in existence, and known of it, we might, from that moment, have claimed our deliverance as a matter of right. And if we, in having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, become that which he was, namely, meritorious, or deserving of eternal life, then might we disown the character of supplicants, and approach the Judge of all in language suited to those who had always pleased him. But neither can this be. The acts and deeds of one may *affect* others, but can, in no case, become actually theirs, or be so transferred as to render that justice, which would otherwise have been of grace. The imputation of our sins to Christ, and of his righteousness to us, does not consist in a transfer of either the one or the other, except in their effects. Christ suffered, not because he *was*, but merely *as if he had been* the sinner: notwithstanding the imputation of sin to him, he died *the just for the unjust.* On the other hand, we are justified, not because we *are*, but *as though we were* righteous; for the worthiness belongs to him, and not to us.

Finally: *If justification through the redemption of Christ were considered as not only* CONSISTENT WITH *justice, but,* REQUIRED BY *it, it must, I think, be allowed, that every idea of grace is excluded.* That favour toward creatures which justice requires must needs be their due; which leaves no room for grace. It is only of God's *essential* justice, however, that this is true, and not of his covenant righteousness which relates to his own free engagements. God, having pledged his word, would be UNRIGHTEOUS *to forget the work and labour of love* of his believing people; and thus it is, that, *If we confess our sins, he is* FAITHFUL AND JUST *to forgive us our sins.* The righteous fulfilment of engagements, made in a way of grace, is not opposed to it; but that which is required by *essential* justice, is.

This representation of things cannot, in any wise, depreciate the *merit* of Christ: for, be this what it may, it is not *ours*, and can-

not, therefore, constitute any *claim on our behalf, but in virtue of God's free promises*, which, being made in grace, continue such in all their fulfilments.

It is enough if the justification of sinners be *consistent with* justice; and this renders the whole in harmony with grace. Such was the value of Christ's blood-shedding, as, in regard of its effects on the divine government, to be equivalent to our being everlastingly punished; and such the merit of his obedience, as to be worthy of all that God has bestowed on us in reward of it; yet, as there is no transfer but of the *effects*, it does not, in the least, interfere with grace.

If the principles on which the doctrine of atonement proceeds be carefully considered, they will be found, not only consistent with grace, but will rank among the strongest evidences in favour of it.

In proof of this, let the following observations be duly considered:

1. *It is common among men, in showing kindness to the unworthy, to do it out of regard to one that is worthy: which kindness is, nevertheless, considered as a matter of free favour.* You had a friend whom you loved as your own soul. He died, and left an only son. The son proves a dissolute, worthless character, and reduces himself to beggary. Still he is the son of your friend, and you wish to show him kindness. If your kindness be unaccompanied with an explanation of your motives, he may think you have no dislike to his vices. 'Young man,' say you, therefore, 'I am sorry it is not in my power to be your friend from a respect to your own character; but I knew and loved your father, and what I do for you, is *for his sake!*' Here is an exercise of both justice and grace; justice to the memory of the worthy, and grace in the relief of the unworthy. The worthiness of the father is imputed to the son, inasmuch as, in consequence of it, he is treated as though he were himself worthy; but it makes no difference as to his real character or deserts, nor, in any wise, renders what is done to him less a matter of grace than if it had not been done in consideration of his father's worthiness. If Onesimus were forgiven by Philemon, at the intercession of Paul, (as there is no reason to

doubt that he was,) he would not on that account, think of its being less an act of grace.

2. *God, in his dealings with mankind, has frequently proceeded upon the same principle, bestowing blessings on the unworthy out of respect to one that was worthy; which blessings, nevertheless have been of pure grace.* God promised the posterity of Noah exemption from a future flood: but knowing that they would utterly corrupt themselves, his covenant was primarily made with *him*. It was thus in the blessings promised to the posterity of Abraham. The Lord, knowing that they would be very corrupt, spake thus to Abraham himself: *As for me, behold, my covenant is* WITH THEE, *and thou shalt be a father of many nations.* Hence, in a great number of instances wherein mercy was shown to the rebellious Israelites, they were reminded, that it was *not for their sakes,* but on account of the covenant made with their father Abraham, and renewed with Isaac and Jacob. Thus also, in the covenant made with David, God blessed his posterity for his sake, saying, *My covenant shall stand fast* WITH HIM. And when the heart of Solomon was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, he was told, that, if the Lord did not rend the kingdom utterly from him, it would not be for his sake, but for David his servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which he had chosen. In these instances, there was a display of both justice and grace, and the righteousness of the fathers was, as I may say, imputed to the children, inasmuch as, in consequence of it, they were treated as if they themselves were righteous; but it makes no difference as to their deserts, nor in any wise renders what was done to them less a matter of grace, than if it had proceeded merely from the divine goodness, and without any consideration of the righteousness of their fathers. So far from this, the very language, *Not for your sakes do I this,—be it known unto you,—but for my holy name's sake,—and for the covenant that I made with your fathers,* would tend, more than any thing, to humble them, and to impress them with the idea that what they had was altogether of grace.

If it be objected, that in these cases, though the blessing was of grace to the party receiving it, yet it was in reward of the party for whose sake it was given; I answer, It is in respect of

the party receiving, and him only, that it is called grace; and this is sufficient for its being so denominated. It is of what justification is to us, and not what it is to Christ, that the Apostle speaks. It is enough if it be of grace to us, and if God's bestowing it upon us out of respect to the worthiness of his Son, do not diminish that grace, but on the contrary, augment it.

But it may be said, that in these cases, there was no example of the innocent suffering for the guilty; no atonement; no redemption of the parties by a sacrifice offered in their stead. We therefore proceed to observe.

3. *God, in the appointment of animal sacrifices (though they were only shadows of good things to come,) sanctified the principle of sin being expiated by the sufferings of a substitute, and yet represented the sinner as* FREELY FORGIVEN. The process of the burnt offering is thus described: *If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will,* (or, as Ainsworth renders it, *for acceptance,*) *at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering: and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him,* &c. The current language concerning these sacrifices is, *And the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin that he hath committed, and* IT SHALL BE FORGIVEN HIM. In all these transactions there was justice and grace; justice in requiring a sacrifice, and grace in forgiving the transgressor. There was also *imputation*: the sin of the party was imputed to the appointed victim, which was reckoned as though it were the sinner, and treated as such in the divine administration. The atonement made by the sacrifice was, on the other hand, imputed to him that offered it; that is, it was reckoned to his account, and he was treated accordingly. This is clear from what is said of one, the flesh of whose offering was neglected to be eaten before the third day according to appointment. *It shall not be* ACCEPTED, *neither shall it be* IMPUTED *unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity;* implying, that, if offered according to the divine appointment, it

was accepted for him, and imputed to him, and he should not bear his iniquity.

In all these substitutional sacrifices, atonement did not operate to the diminution of grace; they were not such a payment of the sinner's debt as that he should be entitled to deliverance as a matter of claim; since the issue of all was, *And his sins shall be* FORGIVEN *him.* On the contrary, every thing was calculated to magnify the grace of God, and to humble the sinner in the dust before him. Of this tendency, particularly, was his having to lay his hand upon the head of the sacrifice, confessing his sin, and acknowledging, in effect, that, if he had been treated according to his deserts, he himself must have been the victim.

The doctrine of sacrifices receives an interesting illustration from the case of Job and his three friends: *And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly.* We see here that the three friends could not be justified on the ground of their own conduct. They must either be accepted through a sacrifice and intercessor, or be dealt with according to their folly. And this sacrifice and intercession, instead of making void the grace of the transaction, goes to establish it. It must have been not a little humiliating to Eliphaz and his companions, to be given to understand, that all their zeal for God had been folly, and required an atonement; that the Lord would not receive a petition at their hands; that the sacrifices must be brought to Job, and offered up in his presence; and that, after all their contumelious language to him, they must owe their acceptance to his intercession. Had they been forgiven without this process, their sin must have appeared light, and the grace of God in its forgiveness have been diminished, in their apprehension, in comparison of what it was.

4. *The New Testament, while it represents the interposition of Christ as necessary for the consistent exercise of mercy, ascribes the whole of our salvation, nevertheless, to the free grace of God.* I need not prove this position by a number of references. The doctrine of the New Testament, on this subject, is summarily comprehended in the verses following the text, which contain the Apostle's explanation of his own words. Having stated, that we are *justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, he adds, *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation: We see here, in what *the redemption of Christ*, by which we are justified, consisted. He himself was made an expiatory sacrifice, through which God might be propitious to sinners, without any dishonour attaching to his character.

Through faith in his blood: In order to an Israelite being benefitted by the appointed sacrifices, it was necessary for him, or for the priest on his behalf, to put his hands upon the head of the animal and there to make confession of sins. Hence the offerers of sacrifices are denominated *the comers thereunto.* And thus it is necessary to our deriving benefit from the propitiation of Christ, that we should believe in him.

To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins: The first thing necessary in our justification, is the remission of sin. The grand impediment to this was, that it would reflect upon the *righteousness* of God; representing either his precepts and threatenings as too rigid to be put in execution, or his mercy as being mere connivance. Hence, when a great act of mercy was to be shown, it became necessary to preface it by a declaration, or demonstration, of righteousness. God, by making his beloved Son a sacrifice, practically declared, or demonstrated in the presence of the universe, his determination to maintain the honour of his government, and his utter abhorrence of sin. Having done this, he can now forgive the believing sinner, without any suspicion of connivance attaching to his character.

Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: The propitiation of Christ was not only necessary in behalf of believers under the times of the gospel, but of those in former ages. Those who had offered sacrifices were not forgiven in virtue of them, but of this. On the ground of Christ's undertaking to become a propitiation in the fulness of time, the *forbearance* of God was exercised towards them. And, now that his righteousnes is declared, he can be *just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Supposing the foregoing comments to be the substance of the Apostle's meaning, what is there in any part of it, which renders void, or in any wise diminishes, the free grace of God? Does the declaration, or demonstration, of his righteousness *for the remission of sins* render it no remission? Would it have been more of a favour for God to have pardoned sin without any regard to righteousness, than with it? Is there any thing, in the whole proceeding, that puts the sinner in possession of a claim on the ground of essential justice, or which warrants him to hope for an interest in its blessed results, without coming to the Saviour as guilty and unworthy?

There is nothing in the New Testament which represents the death of Christ as superseding the necessity of repentance, confession, and humble supplication, or as investing the believer with any other claim of spiritual blessings, than that which arises from the free promise of God through his dear Son. We never read there of "suing out our right;" nor of mercy being a matter of demand, since Christ has paid the debt. All is in the language of supplication in the name of Christ.

The *intercession of Christ himself*, on our behalf, proceeds upon the same principle. It would not otherwise be *intercession.* "Grace," as Dr. Goodwin observes, "requires to be applied for in a way of *entreaty* and *intercession.*"*

* The words of our Lord in John xvii. 24. *Father,* I WILL, &c. have been thought to convey a different idea:

"With cries and tears he offered up
His humble suit below;

Those who plead for the intercession of Christ in a way of *authority*, or *demand*, ground it on his sacrifice and merits; which, being of infinite worth, must, they suppose, entitle him to ask favours for his people in this manner. That God, in love to his dear Son, should reward his voluntary obedience unto death with the bestowment of eternal salvation on them that believe in him, and even lay himself under obligation to do so, is perfectly consistent with its being of grace; but obligation of this kind furnishes no ground for *demand*, nor does it appear, from the scriptures, that the Majesty of heaven and earth was ever so approached. In the gospel-way of salvation, grace and justice *meet*, or are *combined*, in the same thing. Grace, through the righteousness of Jesus, *reigns*, not in one or two stages, but in every stage, *unto eternal life*: but, on the principle of salvation being an object of demand, it must, in some stages of it, become a matter of mere justice: it might be grace to provide the deliverer, but there would be none in the deliverance itself.

However worthy Christ was to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; yet, when pleading for *sinners*, it required to be in the language of *intercession*. His worthiness is that, indeed, on account of which we are treated *as if we were* worthy, but it does not render us meritorious. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; but it is only in its *effects* that it is transferred, or, indeed, transferable. The sum is, there is nothing in the atonement or justifying right-

> But with *authority* he asks,
> Enthroned in glory now.
> For all that come to God by him,
> Salvation he *demands*;
> Points to their names upon his breast,
> And spreads his wounded hands."
>
> TOPLADY.

This petition, however, was offered up when our Lord was upon earth; and his intercession in heaven is called *prayer*: *I will* PRAY *the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.* "The verb rendered *will*," says Dr. Campbell, "is the same which, in Matt. xii. 38, and Mark x. 35, is rendered *would*, and ought to have been so rendered here, as it implies request, not command.

eousness of Christ that, in any wise, supercedes the necessity of our being freely forgiven, or freely blessed.

I conclude with a few reflections on the whole subject:

First: If the doctrine here stated and defended be true, there is, in *the nature of sin*, something much more offensive to God, than is generally supposed. Is it conceivable, that God, whose nature is love, would have *cursed* the work of his hands for a matter of small account? He does not delight in cursing: he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men. Yet every transgressor of his law is declared to be accursed. All the curses in the book of God stand against him: in his basket and in his store; in the city, and in the field; in his going out, and in his coming in; and in all that he setteth his hand unto. Nor is it confined to the present life, but includes everlasting punishment. Is it conceivable, that God would have made his son a sacrifice, or that the Lord of glory would have come into the world for this purpose, if sin had not been an evil and a bitter thing? If it were no more than men in general conceive it to be, assuredly so much would not have been made of it. It is upon light thoughts of sin, that a disbelief of justification through the blood-shedding of Christ is grafted: but, let us think of it as lightly as we may, if God thinks otherwise, we shall be in the wrong; for *The judgment of God is according to truth.*

Secondly: If this doctrine be true, the danger of our being lost arises, not from the magnitude of our sin, be it what it may, but from a *self-righteous rejection of the only way of acceptance with God.* Let the nature or degrees of sin be what they may, there is no reason, on that account, to despair of salvation. On the contrary, there is the utmost encouragement for the most guilty and unworthy to return to God by Jesus Christ. Every bar in the way of acceptance, which respected the government of God, is removed. God can be just, and yet the justifier of the believer in Jesus. More glory redounds to him, even to his justice, from salvation than from damnation. Nor is there any cause to doubt the willingness of God to show mercy. He is, indeed, unwilling to show mercy to those who seek it in any other way than Christ, or, rather, is determined they shall not find it; but every one

that seeketh in his name findeth. There is one great and overwhelming fact that answers all objections: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* The pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, are blessings of such magnitude, that nothing in this world is to be compared with them: yet these are less than what has been given already; for the argument of the Apostle is from the greater to the less. If we be willing to receive Christ, and with him all things freely, there is nothing to hinder it. If the door of mercy be shut upon us, it is a *self-righteous spirit* that shuts it. Look at a self-justifying spirit in respect of faults committed between man and man. Persons of very ordinary capacity, in other things, will here be ingenious to admiration in framing excuses. They who seem scarcely able to speak on other subjects will be quite eloquent in defending themselves; dwelling on circumstances that make in their favour, keeping out of sight of what makes against them, alleging their good intentions, even in things which in themselves cannot be justified; and shunning, as one would shun the road to death, a frank acknowledgement of their sin, and a humble petition for mercy. Of the same nature is a self-righteous spirit in respect of sin committed against God; and this it is that shuts the door of mercy. If a convict under a just sentence of death be assured, from authority, that, if he confess his guilt, and petition for mercy, he will be forgiven; and if, instead of making such confession and supplication, he either pleads *not guilty*, or at least insists upon his *comparative* innocence, or upon some circumstances which may *entitle* him to mercy, should we not say, of such a man, 'He shuts the door of mercy on himself? He dies, not on account of the magnitude of his crime, but of his pride and obstinacy. His original crime is still, indeed, the formal cause of his punishment; but it is owing to his self-justifying spirit, that it was finally laid to his charge.' And thus it is that the scriptures ascribe the loss of the soul to unbelief: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but* THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDETH ON HIM.—*Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they*

sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.

It is remarkable, that, in drawing a conclusion from the doctrine of absolute sovereignty, in which the Apostle had taught, that God had *mercy on whom he would have mercy,* he ascribes the failure of the Jews, not to their non-election, but to their unbelief.

Finally: Though justification be of *grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,* yet, without good works, we can give no proof of our being justified. The whole argument of the Apostle, in the sixth chapter of this Epistle, teaches, that believers cannot live in sin, being dead to it, and alive to God. Those who are in Christ Jesus, to whom there is now no condemnation, are said to *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* We need not wish for stronger evidence in favour of the doctrine of free justification, than that which is furnished by the objections which are answered by the Apostle. No other notion of justification than that which is of grace, through Christ, would admit of such objections as he encounters: no other doctrine, therefore, can justly pretend to be apostolical.

It follows, however, that, while we contend for the doctrine, it concerns us so to walk, as not to furnish its adversaries with a handle for reproaching it as unfriendly to a life of holiness. The law of God, though not the medium of life, is, nevertheless, the rule of conduct; and though we are justified by *faith* alone, yet good works are necessary to prove it to be genuine. Thus it is that faith is *shown,* and *made perfect* by works. All who profess to believe the doctrine do not live under its influence; and they who do, are exposed to other influences. Whatever peace of mind, therefore, it may be adapted to produce, it furnishes no ground for carnal or presumptuous security.

SERMON XX.

EPHES. ii. 13.

But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

IT is common to speak of our country, in respect of its high state of civilization and cultivation, as a garden. But to know what civilization and cultivation have done for us, we must know, what we were in former ages, when the island was little better than a wilderness, and its inhabitants a race of barbarians.

Thus, if we would understand what Christianity has done for us, we must acquaint ourselves with the condition in which we were, while subject to pagan darkness and superstition. It is thus that the Apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, teaches them the value of the blessings and privileges of the gospel, by directing their attention to the state in which they were, before it reached them.

At the beginning of the chapter, they are reminded of their state as sinners *in common with other sinners: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the*

children of disobedience: among whom also we all (Jews as well as Gentiles) *had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* But, in addition to this, the Apostle reminds them of their *peculiar condition as heathens: Remember, that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh,—that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* This being, in some respects, the greatest remove from God in which men could place themselves, they are emphatically said to have been *far off.* Sinners, among the Jews, were subjectively distant from God; but they were so both subjectively and objectively, as being destitute of the most important means of knowing him.

In discoursing upon the subject, we shall first observe that state of distance which is peculiar to heathens; secondly, that which is common to heathens and all other sinners; and, thirdly, the way in which they are recovered, and brought nigh.

I. Let us observe THAT STATE OF DISTANCE WHICH IS PECULIAR TO HEATHENS. This is far from being an uninteresting subject to us. At the time this Epistle was written, our fathers were in this very state; and had not the gospel been brought to us by those who had heard and believed it, we had been in the same state at this day. Instead of being met together, as we now are, to worship the living God through the mediation of his Son, we had been assembled to adore stocks and stones; instead of singing the high praises of Jehovah, nothing had been heard in our cities, towns, and villages, but the vociferations of idolatry; instead of the gratifying sights arising from the institutions of humanity and benevolence, we should have been witnesses, and perhaps more than witnesses, of the offering up of human sacrifices!

The description given of this state by the Apostle, in verses 11, 12, is very affecting: *At that time ye were* WITHOUT CHRIST. The only way in which Christ could be known, was by revelation; and the only people to whom a revelation was made, was Israel. To them pertained the oracles of God, and the covenants of promise. Being, therefore, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, they

must needs be strangers from the covenants of promise, and so, of course, be without Christ. And being without Christ, they had *no hope*, either of their sins being forgiven, or of a blessed hereafter. And though they daily partook of the bounties of Providence, yet, being without Christ, and without hope, they were without God in the world!

Such was the state of the heathen world at the coming of Christ. The science of Egypt, Chaldea, Greece, and Rome, had discovered much, as to things pertaining to the present life; but, in respect of an hereafter, all was enveloped in gross darkness. The far greater part did not think of it, and they that did, knew but just enough to make them miserable. They were aware that, like all others, they must die; and, knowing that they had not lived and acted, even to each other, as they ought, their consciences forboded a state in which they would be called to account; but what it would be, they knew not.

The following lines might be written by a pensive infidel of modern times; but they would have fitted the lips of a pagan:

> "Distrust and darkness of a future state
> Makes poor mankind so fearful of his fate:
> Death of itself is nothing; but we fear
> To be we know not what, we know not where."

Such, or nearly such, must have been the reflections of the most serious among the heathen; and as to the rest, they were buried in all manner of wickedness. It is of the nature of idolatry, to efface and obliterate from the mind all just thoughts of God and true religion, and to substitute in their place vain imaginations and vile affections. Instead of a holy, just, and good Being presiding over the universe, imaginary deities are set up, whose office it is to preside over particular countries and concerns; and this, in a manner suited to the inclinations of their worshippers, entering into all their prejudices, and patronizing their most favourite vices.

There is a marked connexion between impiety and obscenity, or the casting off of the knowledge and worship of God, and being given up to the basest practices towards one another. *God is*

jealous, and the Lord revengeth! If they dishonour him by transferring his glory to an idol, he will give them up in turn to dishonour their own bodies. If they change the truth of God the creator, who is blessed forever, into the practical lie of worshipping that as God which is not God, for this cause they shall be given up to vile affections. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a mind void of judgment, and to the practice of every thing obscene, unnatural, unjust, malignant, false, and cruel; not only to wallow like filthy beasts in the mire, but to prefer the society of such as their friends and companions! If any doubt, whether this picture be not overcharged, let faithful witnesses be heard, and they will report the same things of heathen countries at this day.

We hear, from men calling themselves Christians, but who, in fact, are Infidels, flattering accounts of heathen virtue, and laboured attempts to prove the virtuous tendency of the system. Idols, instead of being competitors with the true God, are represented as connected with him; as though it were a matter of indifference to whom the worship is presented, Jehovah, Jove, or Baal; all is received as a tribute paid to the common father of all. Such are the sentiments taught by one of our poets; and such are the principles of so large a part of our countrymen, that, if Britons do not christianize India, India may be expected soon to heathenize Britain! Shall we, in complaisance to Infidels, throw away our Bibles, and listen to their pleas for the most sottish stupidity that ever disgraced human nature! The voice of reason, and (thank God!) the voice of Britain, answer, No! We ourselves were sometimes darkness; but, if we have been made light in the Lord, let us walk as children of the light.

We proceed to observe,

II. THAT STATE OF DISTANCE WHICH IS COMMON TO HEATHENS AND ALL OTHER SINNERS. We have seen already, that there is a state, described at the beginning of the chapter, which refers not to what the Ephesians were by education, by custom, or by any other circumstances attending their former life, but to what they were *by nature*. It was in respect of this, that the Apostle reckoned himself and his countrymen, notwithstanding their living

under the light of revelation, among them; and, in this respect, we also, notwithstanding our living under the light of the gospel, must be reckoned with them: *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

The Apostle does not tell the Ephesians from whom, or from what, they were *far off*, the reason of which might be, that there was no one word that would convey the fulness of the sentiment. He might have said, Ye were far off from happiness; this had been true: or, far off from peace; this had been true: or, far off from righteousness; this had been true: or, far off from hope; this also had been true: he might mean to comprehend them all, and, therefore, made use of general terms. If any word, more comprehensive than the rest, had been used, it must have been, far off from God. This is the last term in the preceding description, to which the words *far off* refer: *without Christ,—having no hope; and* WITHOUT GOD *in the world!*

There is a natural distance from God, which necessarily belongs to us, and to the loftiest archangel, as creatures. But this distance is not removed by *the blood of Christ.* The enjoyments of heaven itself will not remove or diminish it. It is not of this, therefore, that the Apostle writes; but of that moral distance from God which belongs to us as sinners. There is nothing sinful in being far off from God, in the first sense; but to be far off in our thoughts of him, affections towards him, and desires after him, is of the essence of sin. This is alienation of heart, which stamps the character: for what a man's heart is, that is he. If a subject be so full of disaffection to his rightful prince, that he has no feeling of respect towards him, no mind to please him, nor to think, or read or hear, any thing in his praise, this were alienation of heart: and, if all this were without cause we should say, of such a man, that he did not deserve to live under a government to which he was so wickedly disaffected. Yet this is the state of mind of sinners toward the blessed God. They call not upon his name; but rise in the morning, and retire at evening, as if there were no God, and no hereafter; as if they had no soul to be saved or lost: but,

like the animals that surround them, were made to eat, drink, and sleep, for a few years, and then to die, and be no more! The things of God do not occupy their minds; and, unless they conceive of his character as very different from what the scriptures represent it, they do not like to think of him, nor to speak of him, nor to hear others speak of him, or of any thing pertaining to him as revealed in the Bible. The serious mention of his name strikes a damp upon their spirits, and often puts an end to a conversation. They have no delight in reading his word, and never make it their study to do any thing because he requires it. What is all this but practically saying to God, *Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

We have not to go into the heathen world, in search of such characters as these: they are found in all our cities, towns, villages, and congregations, and in almost all our families. We may call ourselves Christians, and yet be without Christ; and we may declaim against atheism, and yet live without God in the world.

But, though all sinners are far off from God, yet some are farther off than others. Every sinner has gone so far from God, that he will never return of his own accord. The ways of sin are our *own ways;* we find them without any difficulty, but never return till the good Shepherd finds us, and brings us home. But some are farther off than others. As sin obtains in different degrees, so does the distance at which it places us from God. The scriptures repressnt some persons as in a more hopeless state than others; and the same person is farther off at one period of life than at another. Sin being progressive, the longer any one lives in it without repentance, the farther off he necessarily is from God. Every sinner *going on still in his trespasses,* is getting more and more hardened, and farther from the hearing of the calls of conscience and of God.

Shall I mention a few cases of persons whom the scriptures represent as farthest from God? You may expect me to name the *profligate*, who is at open war with God; who breaks the Sabbath, wallows in intemperance and debauchery, and laughs at all serious religion. And true it is, that such characters are at an awful distance from God: yet many who have been thus far off,

have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. Such were some of the Corinthians, and such have been some of us.

There is a case more hopeless than this, namely, that of the *self-righteous.* Of the Pharisees, who were *righteous in their own eyes, and despised others,* it is said, that *publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them.* When some of them came to John, he called them *a generation of vipers,* and asked, with surprise, *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* Our Lord asked them, *How can ye escape the damnation of hell?* as though they were so fast bound by the chains of spiritual pride, as to render their deliverance next to impossible. Reprove a drunkard or a debauchee, and you will have his conscience on your side. Converse with him seriously on temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, and he will tremble. But he that is pure in his own eyes, and yet not cleansed from his filthiness, his very *mind and conscience is defiled.* Thinking highly of himself, and of his doings, he will resent every thing said to him, which calls in question the goodness of his state. He flatters himself that he is at peace with God, and does not choose to be disturbed in his repose. Talk to him of Christ Jesus having come into the world to save *sinners,* even the chief of sinners, and it will either appear to him a strange doctrine, or, if he comprehend your design, it is likely he will feel himself insulted. He says in his heart, 'Am I, after all the pains that I have taken, to be placed on a footing with the worst of characters? If so, where is the justice of God?' Thus the gospel seems a hard saying, and he cannot hear it. A sinner, in such a state of mind, is farther from God, and more hopeless, than the profligate whom he despises: *The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.* Yet, even from this distance, some have been made nigh by the blood of Christ? Of this the Apostle himself was an example, as were also the great company of the priests, who were obedient to the faith.

But there is another case, which may be reckoned still more hopeless, and the party still farther off from God. This is, where a person has sat under the preaching of the gospel for a number of years, but who, living still in his sins, at length becomes *past feeling*. Such characters, I fear, are not very uncommon in our congregations. Should there be one such present at this time, let me reason with him: 'Thirty or forty years ago, it may be, you heard the gospel, and felt, and wept under it. Some of your fellow-worshippers, observing the tears which fell from your eyes, conceived a hope that the heart of stone was taken away, and a heart of flesh imparted. But these convictions wore off; and, by degrees, the most pungent things might be delivered in your hearing, without leaving any impression on your mind. The case was this: Under your convictions, you desisted from your evil courses: but, as the former subsided, you returned to the latter. At first, you indulged in lesser sins; then in greater; till, at length, your whole study was, not how you should avoid sin, but how you should indulge in it, and yet conceal it: and, it may be, you have succeeded in both, to a great degree; living in uncleanness, or drunkenness, or in some other sin, and yet concealing it from the world, and filling up your place in the house of God. And now you can hear the most awful threatenings and the most melting expostulations, unmoved. Your heart is become callous and insensible. Conscience itself is seared, as with a hot iron. In a word, you are *past feeling*. Many have perished in this state, and many, doubtless, will perish: yet, even from this state of distance, some have been made nigh by the blood of Christ: *If from* THENCE *thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.—For the Lord thy God is a merciful God*'

Thus far we have considered the distance of sinners from God, merely in respect of their alienation of heart from him; but we must not confine it to this: as men have wickedly departed from God, God has righteously withdrawn from them; and thus the distance, being mutual, is increased. While man continued obedient, his Creator admitted him to near communion with him, as is intimated by his walking in the garden in the cool of the day; but,

when he transgressed his commandment, he withdrew his favour thrust him out of paradise, and placed a guard about the tree of life, rendering it inaccessible.

Had there been no provision of mercy through the promised seed, there could have been no more communion between God and man, any more than between God and the fallen angels. Men might have dragged out a guilty and miserable existence in the world, but they must have lived and died under the curse.* Whatever had been bestowed upon them, it would have been in wrath, in like manner as riches are given some men to their hurt. Whatever had been their troubles, they would have had no God to repair to under them; and whatever their prospects, the hope of a blessed hereafter would have made no part of them.

This awful state of distance from God is *still* the condition of the unbelieving and the ungodly. The interposition of Christ avails not in behalf of them. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Being without Christ, they are without hope, and without God in the world. Every thing they do is evil; every thing they possess is cursed; and every

* Some have thought, that the death threatened in Gen. ii. 17. was merely corporal, and that, if it had been executed, man would have been immediately struck out of existence. But the death there threatened, whatever it was, *passed upon all men,* which implies the existence of all men, and which would have been prevented, if Adam had, at that time, been reduced to a state of non-existence, or had even been banished from this world. The original constitution of things must, therefore, have provided for the existence of every individual that has since been born into the world; and this, whether man should stand or fall. The death here threatened, doubtless, included that of the body, and which God might execute at pleasure: the day he should eat, he would be dead in law; but it also included the loss of the divine favour, and an exposedness to his wrath. If it were not so, the redemption of Christ would not be properly opposed to it, which it frequently is. Rom. v. 12—21. It must be to this sentence that the apostle refers in Heb. ix, 27. *It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;* or Christ's being *once offered to bear the sins of many,* and his *coming a second time without sin unto salvation,* would not have been introduced as antidotes to the evils: but if the sentence included both *death and judgment,* it must be more than corporal death.

hour they live in that state of mind adds to their guilt and misery. As *all things work together for good to them that love God*, so all things work together for evil to them that love him not. Under all their calamities and troubles, they have no God on whom to cast their cares, and, in death, have nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment. The very messengers of mercy are charged, on their peril, to say to the wicked, *It shall be ill with him.*

How tremendously awful, then, is the condition of the unbelieving and the ungodly! There is one way of escape, and but one: and is it possible that this can be disregarded; and that men can live easy and unconcerned, with the curse of God over their heads? Surely this must be owing to a disbelief of the divine *threatenings*, as well as of the doctrine of the gospel. But take heed, *lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven!* In this terrible condition the gospel finds us. To *this* door of hope we shall now direct your attention, by considering,

III. THE WAY IN WHICH SINNERS ARE RECOVERED, AND BROUGHT NIGH TO GOD. It is *in Christ Jesus*, and *by the blood of Christ*. In Christ we possess all. It is as being *in Christ Jesus*, that we possess all spiritual blessings; and by the shedding of his blood they were obtained.

The blood of Christ may be considered in three views: as shed upon the cross; as proclaimed by the preaching of the gospel; and as believed in for salvation by the perishing sinner. These, being united, bring near those who were once far off.

1. *By the blood of Christ, as shed upon the cross, atonement was made, sin was expiated, and a way opened for God to draw near to the sinner, and the sinner to God.* In punishing transgresors, displeasure is expressed against transgression. In substitutionary sacrifices, displeasure was expressed against transgression; but,

withal, mercy to the transgressor: the first, as signifying that thus the offerer deserved to have been treated; the last, as accepting a substitute in his stead. In the sacrifice of Christ, both these sentiments were expressed in the highest degree: *God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,* (or by a sacrifice for sin,) CONDEMNED *sin in the flesh.—He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* In proportion as God's own Son was dear to him, and, as possessed of divine dignity, estimable by him, such were the hatred of sin, and the love to sinners, manifested in smiting him.

If mercy had been exercised to man without such an expression of displeasure against their sin, it must have appeared to the creation to be connivance, and the character of God must have sunk in their estimation. He must have appeared to be very strict indeed in his precepts, and severe in his threatenings; but as lax in enforcing them, as though he had known, from the beginning, that they would not bear to be acted upon. The fallen angels, in particular, must have felt, that it could not be *justice* that consigned them to hopeless perdition; for justice is impartial. If the Creator could connive at sin in one instance, he could in another. Thus the bands of moral government had been broken, and the cords which held creation together, cast away.

But, by the atonement of Christ, a way is opened for the consistent exercise of mercy. There was a kind of atonement made by the vengeance taken on the old world; also by that on the Benjamites, as recorded in the last chapters of Judges. Each of these events served to express the divine displeasure against sin, and each made way for the exercise of mercy: the one, toward Noah and his posterity; and the other, toward the remnant that had taken refuge in the rock Rimmon. Thus, in the death of Christ, though he died *the just for the unjust*, yet God herein expressed his displeasure against sin, and, having done this, could be *just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* There is now no bar, in respect of the government of God, why any sinner should not, on returning to him in the name of his Son, find mercy. On this ground, sinners, without distinction, are actually invited to

come unto him, and be saved. The only bar that remains is a spirit of pride and unbelief. If they can believe in Jesus, receiving salvation as God's free gift through him, *all things are possible to him that believeth.*

When, on visiting a dying man, I hear him talk of having 'made his peace with God,' I tremble for him. If our peace be made with God, it is by the blood of the cross. What are our confessions, or prayers, or tears? Can they heal the awful breach? If so, God would have spared his own Son, and not have delivered him up to be made a sacrifice. It had then been possible for the cup to pass from him, and it would, no doubt, have passed from him. If without the shedding of blood there be no remission; and if it were impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, the consequence is, that either Christ must be the sacrifice, or we must die in our sins, and perish. *He* hath made peace by the blood of his cross: it is not for us to assume to be peacemakers, but to accept of his mediation.

2. *The blood of Christ, as proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel, is the appointed mean of bringing sinners near to God.* It is the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ, that is, by way of eminency, called *the gospel.* It was this doctrine which Christ commissioned his disciples to preach to every creature: *Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be* PREACHED IN HIS NAME, AMONG ALL NATIONS, *beginning at Jerusalem!* This doctrine is *good news* to every creature; and that, whether it be received or rejected. It is good news, that a way is opened, by the death of Christ, for any sinner to return to God, and be saved; and that, if any sinner walk therein, he shall be saved. It is the ministry of reconciliation, in which the servants of Christ, as though God did beseech by them, pray men in Christ's stead, saying, *Be ye reconciled to God.* Its being made light of by the greater part of men does not alter its nature; and this they shall know another day. God brings *near* his righteousness, even to them that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness. *Into whatsoever city ye enter*, said our Lord, *and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are there-*

in, and say unto them, THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME NIGH UNTO YOU. *But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that* THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME NIGH UNTO YOU. *But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.*

3. *By the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ, we are actually brought nigh.* As the prodigal was brought home to his father's house and family, so we are brought home to God. It is thus that we become actually reconciled to God. *If when we were enemies,* says the Apostle, *we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* The term *reconciled* is here manifestly used in different senses. In the first instance, it refers to the making of atonement: in the last, to our believing acquiescence in it; or, as it is expressed in the following verse, to our *receiving the atonement.* It is in this way that our sins are forgiven; that we are justified, or accepted, in the Beloved; that we are invested with the privilege of being the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; that God is our God, and we his people, by a new and better covenant; that we have access to him as our heavenly Father, and to all the ordinances and privileges of his house: finally, it is as believing in him that died and rose again, that we live in hope of eternal life.

There is a term used by the Apostle in Ephes. iii. 12, which conveys a very expressive idea, not only of the nearness to which believers are admitted by the faith of Christ, and which is denoted by the term *access,* but of their being *introduced* by him, as by one *taking them by the hand,* and presenting them to the King.* We could not be admitted into the divine presence by ourselves; but our Mediator, taking us as it were by the hand, presents us to God. It is thus that we are *accepted in the Beloved* on our first believing, and in all our approaches to the throne of grace, have access to God.

* Προσαγωγή, Introduction, manuductioa, or being led by the hand.

To conclude: If we have been made nigh, it becomes us, not only to be thankful for so great a favour, but to feel a deep and anxious concern for others, who, at present, are far off. Whether we consider the state of heathens, of Mahometans, or of our own unbelieving countrymen, they have each a claim on our compassion. And, if Christ withheld not his blood to bring us nigh, it surely is not for us to withhold any labour or expense in carrying his gracious designs into execution.

SERMON XXI.

JOSHUA xxiii. 11.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.

IT is an interesting account that we have of the last days of Joshua. He is very anxious, that, when he should cease to be their leader, Israel should cleave unto the Lord. To make as deep an impression upon their minds as possible, he first called for the elders and leading men among them, and delivered a serious charge to them: after this, he gathered all the tribes together before the Lord in Shechem, where he solemnly rehearsed the dealings of the Lord with them, and bound them, by every consideration that he could suggest, not to forsake him, and go after the idols of the heathen. It is in this connexion that he introduces the words of the text, *Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God;* intimating, that in order to be obedient to the Lord, and secure against idolatrous departures from him, it was necessary, not merely to own him as their God, but to be cordially attached to his name and government. The word rendered *yourselves*, in the text, is, in the margin rendered *your souls;* denoting, that it is not a superficial inspection of the conduct that is meant, but a looking to our inmost motives, seeing to it that we love the Lord from our very hearts.

This is a charge that would well befit the lips of any servant of God before he leaves the world, and be well suited to the conduct of any people. If our hearts be right with God, all is right; if not, all is wrong.

In discoursing upon the subject, we shall offer a few remarks on the nature of love, and of love to God in particular; consider the importance of it in characterizing the whole of our religion; the danger of declining from it; and the means to be used in promoting it.

I. Let us offer a few remarks ON THE NATURE OF LOVE, AND OF LOVE TO GOD IN PARTICULAR. That we may perceive the extent of the precept, it is necessary that we understand a few of the different ways in which love operates.

1. Observe then, in the first place, that *love operates differently, according to the condition of its object.* If directed to one that is miserable, it works in a way of pity and sympathy; if to one that is in necessity, it will impart to his relief; but if to one greatly our superior, (as to a kind and benevolent sovereign, for instance,) then it will operate in the way of honour, complacency, gratitude, and obedience. I need not say, that God is not subject to either misery or want, and, therefore, that our love to him cannot operate in the way of pity towards him, or by communicating to his necessities. The ways in which love to God operates, are those of honour, complacency, gratitude, and obedience.

2. *Love operates differently, according to the condition of the subject of it.* If no offence has existed between the parties, it is peace and amity; but, if otherwise, it will operate in the way of regret, repentance, and a desire of reconciliation. Man, in his original state, was admitted to commune with his Creator; and love, during his continuance in that state, operated in a way of grateful adoration. But, if a spark of love be kindled in the breast of a fallen creature, it will work in a way of sorrow for sin, and a desire to return to God, as the prodigal did to his father. Moreover, in an innocent creature, love to God would operate in a way of delight and praise; but in a fallen creature, under the preaching of the gospel, it will induce him to embrace the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Hence, the want of faith in Christ is alleged

in proof of the want of love to God: *I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you: I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not.*

3. *A complacency in the divine character still enters into the essence of love.* There may be affections, where this is not; but there can be no true love to God. We may be greatly affected by an apprehension that our sins are forgiven us; and this, merely from self-love: but such affections will not abide. Many who joined in singing praise to the Lord on their deliverance at the Red sea, soon forgot his works; for their hearts were not right with God. Genuine love to God has respect not merely to his benefits, but, to his name, nature, or character, as revealed in the scriptures. As he that hateth not sin *as sin*, has no real hatred to it; so he that loveth not God *as God*, has no real love to him. True love to God, for the gift of his Son and salvation through his death, does not merely respect the benefits we receive, but the holy, just, and honourable way in which those benefits are conferred. He that is affected only by the consideration of his own safety, regardless of the way in which it is obtained, cannot be said to love God. Whether God be just or unjust, is, to such a person, a matter of indifference, so that he justifies *him*. The Love of God will lead us to prize that way of salvation which, in making provision for our necessities, secures the divine glory.

II. Let us observe THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE AS CHARACTERIZING THE WHOLE OF OUR RELIGION. Love is not so much a particular grace, as a property pertaining to all the graces. It is, to our graces, that which the holiness of God is to his moral attributes, pervading and characterizing the whole. Indeed, it is holiness itself: if the law be the standard of holiness, that which is the fulfilling of the law, which love is said to be, must comprehend the whole of it. Observe particularly,

1. *It is the love of God which distinguishes true religion from all counterfeits, and from the effects of merely natural principles.* It is this that distinguishes repentance from repentance, faith from faith, and fear from fear. Each of these graces has its counterfeit. Wherein consisted the difference between the repentance of Judas and that of Peter? The one was mere remorse of con-

science; the other proceeded from love to him whom he had denied. Wherein consisted the difference between the belief of those rulers, who, because of the Pharisees, did not confess the Saviour, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, and that which was to the saving of the soul? The one was a conviction which forced itself upon them, while their hearts were averse from it; the other, was *receiving the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* And wherein consists the difference between the fear that has torment, and godly fear? Is it not, that the one is void of love, and the other is not so? Perfect love casteth out the former, but promoteth the latter.

So much as we have of the love of God, so much we have of true religion, and no more. The love that we bear to our fellow-christians, to the law, to the gospel, and even to Christ himself, is the love of God. We see in our brethren the image of God, and love it; in the law of God, a glorious transcript of his mind, and love it; in the gospel, a more glorious transcript of his mind, and love it more; and in the person and work of Christ, the very image of the invisible God, and our hearts are united to him. In loving each of these objects, we love God

2. *It is the love of God that keeps every thing in a state of moral order.* Under its influence, every thing will be done in subserviency to his glory, and every thing taken well at his hand. If God be loved first, he will be sought first. We shall not think of excusing ourselves in the neglect of our duty, by alleging, that we could not find time for it: we commonly find time for things on which our hearts are fixed. It is by the love of God that all our actions are directed to his glory. Unbelievers cannot understand how this is. Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, it is merely for their own gratification, and they cannot conceive of any other end to be answered. Yet it is easy to perceive, how men can make every thing subservient to that which their hearts are set upon, whether it be their interest, or the gratification of their desires. Love to a fellow-creature will render every thing we do subservient to the object. All the labours and journeys of a loving head of a family are directed to their comfort; and all the busy cares of an affectionate wife, to the honour and happiness

of her husband. If, then, God be the supreme object of our love, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do all to his glory.

It is thus that the common concerns of life are converted into religion, and that we shall serve the Lord even in our worldly avocations: *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* It is in *abusing* the world, by giving it that place in our hearts which belongs to God, that it retards us in our progress to heaven If, instead of this, we could *use* it, it would be useful to us even for another life, furnishing us with matter for daily prayer and praise, and thus assisting us in our progress.

If we love God, we shall take every thing well at his hand, and so be reconciled to all his dispensations toward us, whether they be good or evil. We can bear almost any thing from one whom we love; especially when we know that it is accompanied with wisdom, and directed by goodness. When, in the day of Israel's calamity, their enemies asked, *Where is now their God?* it was sufficient to answer, *Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* It was love that dictated those memorable sayings of Job, during the early part of his trials, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!—Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?* It was this that reconciled David, when driven from his throne by the rebellion of his own son: *Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.* And, when cursed by an enemy, viewing it as the Lord's hand stretched out against him, he submitted: *The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David!*

3. *It is the love of God that is the great preservative from error.* If, indeed, the truth of God were a matter of mere speculation, and we might take for granted the sincerity and impartiality of our inquiries, error would then be innocent, and the love of God would be no more of a preservative from it than it is from a mistake in reckoning a sum in arithmetic. But, if divine truth be of a practical nature, and be so clearly revealed, that no unprejudiced mind can materially misunderstand, and, still less, disbelieve it, error is not innocent, and the greatest preservative from falling into it is the love of God. Such is manifestly the import of the

following passages: *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.—Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.—If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.—We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* If it be objected, that 'Good men err; that to ascribe their errors to prejudice, and the want of love to God, is uncandid;' we answer, No good man is free from prejudice, nor does he love God as he ought. To ascribe the errors of others to the same causes to which we ascribe our own, supposing us to be in error, cannot be uncandid. If we loved God as we ought, there would be no prejudice hanging about our minds, and we should imbibe the truth, as angels imbibe it, desiring above all things to look into it. And if we loved him more than we do, we should be more secure than we are from the seducing influence of error. Hence it is, that *the anointing* of the Holy Spirit is represented as teaching us of all things, and causing us to abide in the truth. Hence also, those who have apostatized from the truth are described as not having cordially believed it, but as taking pleasure in unrighteousness.

4. *It is the love of God which is the grand spring of evangelical obedience.* Respect to ourselves, and regard to our present interests, will produce a correctness of conduct, sufficient to excite the respect of those around us; but this is not religion There is no true religion without the love of God; and if, as has been already stated, the love of the law, of the gospel, of our fellow-creatures and fellow-christians, and even of Christ himself, be only the love of God ramified; it must follow, that, without this, we shall not be able to exercise the others, but be merely *lovers of our own selves.* If we take heed to this, we shall have but little else to take heed to; as every duty will becsme our delight, and be cheerfully discharged as a matter of course. Hence, we see the force of the wise man's precept, *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* Look well to the fountain, or the streams

will in vain be expected to be pure. To watch our words and actions to the neglect of our hearts, will be unavailing.

III. Let us consider THE DANGER WE ARE IN, OF DECLINING FROM THE LOVE OF GOD. The serious tone of caution with which the precept is delivered, is expressive of this sentiment: it is only in cases of great danger, that we are charged to take good heed.

The love of God is a plant of heavenly extraction; but, being planted in an unfriendly soil, it requires to be well guarded and watered. We are not only surrounded with objects which attract our affections, and operate as rivals to the blessed God, but have a propensity to depart from him. Whether we consider ousrelves as individuals or as societies, this will be found to be the case.

In the early stages of the Christian life, love is frequently ardent. The first believing views of the grace of the gospel, furnish matter of joyful surprise; and a flow of grateful affection is the natural consequence: *I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live* At this season, we can scarcely conceive it possible to forget him who hath done such great things for us: but if twenty years of cares and temptations pass over us, without producing this effect, it will be happy for us.

In declining from our first love, we are seldom sensible of it, till some of its effects appear; as neglecting the more spiritual exercises of religion, or contenting ourselves with attending to them as a matter of form, without enjoying God in them, or trifling with those sins from which we should heretofore have started back with horror. Our friends often perceive it, and feel concerned on account of it, before we are aware of it ourselves; and happy is it for us, if, by their timely admonitions, or by any other means, we are awakened from our lethargy, and saved from some greater fall, to the dishonour of God and the wounding of our future peace.

I have heard this departure from our first love spoken of as a matter of course, or as that which must be expected. Nay, I have heard it compared to the time when Isaac was *weaned*, at which Abraham made a feast! Some old religious professors, who have become sufficiently cold and carnal themselves, will thus endeav-

our to reconcile young Christians to the same state of mind; telling them, with a cunning sort of smile, that they are at present on the mount of enjoyment, but must expect to come down. And true it is, that love, though it may become deeper and better grounded, may not always operate with that *tenderness of feeling* as it did at first. A change in the constitution, from an advance in years, will account for this. Many things relating to the present world which, in our youth, will produce tears, will not have this effect as we advance in life, though they may still lie with weight upon our minds. But to confound this with religious declension, coldness, and carnality, and to endeavour to reconcile young Christians to it, is erroneous and mischievous. So did not the apostles in their intercourse with young Christians. When Barnabas visited the young Christians at Antioch, he *saw the grace of God, and was glad;* and, instead of leading them to expect a state of declension to follow this their first love, he *exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would* CLEAVE *unto the Lord.* The great head of the church had *somewhat against the Ephesians, because they had left their first love.*

There is no necessity, in the nature of things, for the abatement of our love, or zeal, or joy. The considerations which formerly excited these feelings have not lost their force. It is as true and as important as ever, that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;* and that he is *able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;* and, excepting what the first impression derived from its novelty, would, if we had not declined in love, be as interesting to us. So far from our regard for these and other truths being diminished, there is ground for its being increased. Our first views of Christ and his gospel were very defective; if we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know him in a much greater degree. *The path of the just*, if scripturally pursued, will be *as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.* This was the course which the apostles pursued toward the Christians of their times: *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.—We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward*

each other aboundeth.—Beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. The Apostle himself did not relax, as he drew toward the end of his course, but forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those that were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

To decline in our love is practically saying, that we were once more spiritually-minded, more tender in conscience, and more devoted to God, than was necessary ; that we have not found the religion of Jesus so interesting as we expected, and therefore, have been obliged to have recouse for happiness to our former pursuits ; and that what our old companions told us at the outset, that our zeal would soon abate, and that we should return again to them, was true. *O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!*

If we be in danger of declining as individuals, we are not less so as *societies.* Societies, being composed of individuals, a number of backsliding individuals will soon diffuse their spirit, and produce a backsliding people. It was to a people that the words of Joshua were addressed. That generation of Israelites who went up with him into Canaan, were distinguished by their love to God. They had seen his judgments upon their unbelieving fathers, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and had learned wisdom. It was of them that the Lord spake by Jeremiah, saying, *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase.*— But the very next generation relapsed into idolatry : *Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel.* But when they were gathered to their fathers, *there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.* Even before the death of their venerable leader, the young people had begun to tamper with idolatry. It was on this account, that he assembled the tribes in Shechem, and so solemnly put it to

them to choose, on that day, whom they would serve; and that when they answered, *God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods*, he added, *Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God: he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins.* This was telling them, that they could not serve the Lord and Balaam. Stung with this suggestion, they answered, *Nay, but we* WILL *serve the Lord.* Then said Joshua, *Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel!*

This interesting account furnishes a picture of human nature. The same things have been acted over again in the world. Religion has rarely been preserved in its purity for many generations. Such is the tendency to degenerate, that the greatest and most important reformations have commonly begun to decline, when they who have been principally engaged in them have been gathered to their fathers.

Even the apostles themselves, inspired as they were, could not preserve the churches which they had raised from degeneracy.—The Lord had many things against those seven in Asia, to which the Apocalypse was addressed. We know also, that the great body of professing Christians, in a few centuries, were carried away by the antichristian apostasy; that the descendants of the Reformers have mostly renounced their principles; and that the same is true of the descendants of the Puritans and Non-conformists. Each of these cases furnishes a loud call to us to take good heed unto ourselves, that we love the Lord our God.

IV. Let us conclude with A FEW DIRECTIONS AS TO THE MEANS OF PROMOTING THE LOVE OF GOD. It has been observed already, that love is a tender plant, requiring to be both guarded and watered. It will not thrive among the weeds of worldly lusts. We cannot serve the Lord in this way: if we would serve him, we must put away our idols, and incline our hearts unto the Lord God of Israel. Beware of *the love of the world.* He that loveth the world, the love of God is not in him. Beware of living in the indulgence of *any sin;* any habitual sin is inconsistent with the love of God. It was on this principle, that holy David, after declaring the omniscience and omnipresence of God, invoked his scrutiny:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Wicked *actions* have been found in good men, who have lamented them, and been forgiven; but a wicked *way*, is inconsistent with a state of grace, vitiating the very principle of religion, and turning the whole into hypocrisy. Transgression of this nature must lead to perdition. It is an affecting consideration, how many professors of religion have been found, either before, or soon after, they have left the world, to have lived in private drunkenness, concealed lewdness, or undetected fraud.

But it is not merely by avoiding those things which are inconsistent with the love of God, that we shall promote it; we must also attend to those that cherish it. It is by being conversant with the mind of God, as revealed in his word; by drawing near to him in private prayer; by associating with the most spiritual of his people; by thinking upon his name, especially as displayed in the person and work of Christ, that the love of God will be cherished. As our minds are insensibly assimilated by the books we read, and the company we keep, so it will be in reading the book of God, and associating with his people; and as the glory of God is manifested in the highest degree in the face of Jesus Christ, this is the principal theme for our meditation. It is by our repairing to the cross, that the love of God will be kept alive, and renewed when ready to expire.

SERMON XXII.

PHIL. iii. 10.

Being made conformable unto his death.

THE death of Christ is a subject of so much importance in Christianity, as to be essential to it. Without this, the sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament would be nearly void of meaning, and the other great facts recorded in the New Testament divested of importance. It is not so much a member of the body of Christian doctrine, as the life-blood that runs through the whole of it. The doctrine of the cross is the Christian doctrine. In determining *not to know any thing—save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, the Apostle did not mean to contract his researches, or to confine his ministry to a monotonous repetition of a favourite point, to the neglect of other things; on the contrary, he shunned not to declare *the whole council of God*. The doctrine of *Christ, and him crucified*, comprehended this: it contained a scope, which, inspired as he was, surpassed his powers; and well it might, for angels could not comprehend it, but are described as merely desiring to look into it. There is not an important truth, but what is pre-supposed by it, included in it, or arises out of it; nor any part of practical religion, but what hangs upon it.

It was from this doctrine, that the New Testament writers fetched their most powerful motives. Do they recommend *humility?* It is thus: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Do they enforce an unreserved *devotedness to God?* It is thus: *Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* If they would provoke Christians to *brotherly love*, it is from the same consideration: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* Do they urge a *forgiving spirit?* It is thus: *Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Do they recommend *benevolence* to the poor? It is from this: *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.—Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!* Finally: The common duties of *domestic life* are enforced from this principle: *Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*

It is in immediate relation to this great principle, that both the ordinances of baptism and the supper appear to have been instituted. As many as were baptized, were baptized into Christ's death; and in eating the bread and drinking the wine, they were directed to do it in remembrance of him. It was a wonderful instance of condescending love in the Lord Jesus, to desire to be remembered by us. Had we requested, in the language of the converted thief, to be remembered by him, there had been nothing surprising in it; but it is of the nature of dying love, to desire to live in the remembrance of those who are dear to us. It was not, however, on his own account, but on ours, that he left this dying request. He knew that to remember him, would answer every case that could occur. If afflicted, this would be our

solace; if persecuted, the consideration of him that had endured such contradiction of sinners, would prevent our being weary and faint in our minds; if guilty, this would point out the way of forgiveness; or if tempted to turn aside, this would bind us to his name and cause.

It was by a believing view of this great subject, that the Apostle, at the first, counted all his former privileges and attainments *loss;* and though, in consequence of rendering Judaism, he had exchanged all his earthly prospects for hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and perils, and bitter persecutions, yet, after thirty years' experience, he does not repent, but in a tone of heavenly triumph, adds, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the the righteousness which is of God by faith!*

A mind thus imbued in the sacred theme, we should think, must have known much of Christ already, and, compared with us, he must; yet, after all that he had thought and preached and written, he makes nothing of his attainments, but adopts the language of one that had, in a manner, every thing to learn: *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

The last of these vehement desires seems to be explanatory of some, if not all that precede it. That is, he would know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, as BEING *made conformable unto his death.*

The sentiment here conveyed appears to be, *That the death of Christ is a model to which Christians must aspire to be conformed.* This sentiment we shall endeavour to illustrate and confirm.

There are other models beside the death of Christ; but they are included in this. The *law* of God is that to which we must be conformed. If we be born from above, it is *written in our hearts.* But, as one great end of Christ's death was to honour the divine law, not only in its precept but its penalty, a conformity so the one must include a conformity to the other. The *character* of

God also is represented as a model to which believers are conformed. The new man is created AFTER GOD, *in righteousness and true holiness:* but, as in the death of Christ God was glorified in the highest, a conformity to this must be a conformity to the divine character. The *lives of holy men* are also held up for our imitation, but, as this is only in proportion as they are followers of Christ, a conformity to him includes all that is required of us respecting them.

We shall consider the death of Christ in four views: namely, in respect of the principles on which it proceeded; the motives by which it was induced; the spirit with which it was endured; and the ends which it accomplished. Under each of these views, we shall find things to which we must be conformed. Observe,

I. THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST PROCEEDED. In them, we shall find a standard by which to form our principles, and shall be able to judge, whether they be of God.

1. The death of Christ presupposes, *that we deserved to die.* A sense of this truth is at the foundation of all true religion; it requires therefroe, that we be made conformable to it. God, in the gift of his Son to die, judged us to have been worthy of death; Christ, in giving himself to die, evinced himself to be of the same mind: and such must be our mind, or we can have no interest in the glorious results. Until we see and feel that God is in the right; that we are in the wrong; and that, if he had cast us off forever, it had been no more than we deserved; we shall be strangers to repentance, and as incapable of believing in Christ for salvation, as he that is whole is, of appreciating the value of a physician.

2. The death of Christ presupposes, *that sin is exceeding sinful.* If it were a matter of small account, it may be presumed, that the father would not have made so much of it, as to give his son to be made a sacrifice to atone for it; and that the Son of God would not have laid down his life for that purpose. The curses of the law, and the judgments inflicted at different times on sinners, furnish strong proof of the malignant nature of sin; especially when the native goodness of God is taken into consideration: but the blood of the cross furnishes much stronger. It was a great thing

for the Creator to destroy the work of his hands, and it is so represented: *The Lord said, I will destroy man*, WHOM I HAVE CREATED, *from the face of the earth.* But to smite his beloved Son, was greater. To be made conformable to this principle, we must not conceive of sin as the *weakness*, or *frailty* of human nature, a mere *imperfection* which a good God must needs overlook. Neither must we give heed to those systems of religion which are founded upon these depreciating notions, which, however they may flatter us for the present, will, in the end, assuredly deceive us.

3. The death of Christ presupposes, *that there was nothing, in all our doings or sufferings, that could furnish a ground of salvation, or a single consideration for which we might be forgiven.* Had it been otherwise, Christ would not have died. Men have ever been busily employed in endeavours to propitiate the Deity; some by ceremonial observances, and some by moral; but instead of accomplishing the object, they have only made the case worse. Even those services which were of divine appointment, became, in their hands, offensive; God was weary of their offerings. Christ is represented as taking the work out of their hands: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come!* They were, indeed required as duties for the time, but not for the purpose of making atonement. Not tears, nor prayers, nor alms, nor any other of our doings, will avail as terms of acceptance with God. If we are conformed to the death of Christ, we shall know and feel this to be the case, and shall seek salvation by grace only, through the Mediator. If we are not conformed to the death of Christ in this respect, we have no reason to expect any interest in it.

4. The death of Christ presupposes, *that, for mercy to be exercised in a way consistent with the honour of God, it required to be through a sacrifice of infinite value.* When the Apostle declares, that *it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*, he plainly intimates, that the inherent value of the sacrifice was of essential importance as to its effect. If it were impossible for animal sacrifices to atone for sin, it must be on ac-

count of their insufficiency to demonstrate either the hatred of God to sin, or his love to sinners: but the same reason would apapply to the sacrifice of Christ, if he were merely a creature. Hence, those who deny his divinity, with perfect consistency deny also his atonement. But, on the principle of his divinity, his sufferings were of infinite value; and to this, the scriptures ascribe their efficacy. A careful reader of the New Testament will perceive, that, in exhibiting the *value* and *efficacy* of his death, it connects it with the inherent dignity of his person: *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had* BY HIMSELF PURGED OUR SINS, *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.—We have a* GREAT *high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus* THE SON OF GOD.—*The blood of Jesus Christ* HIS SON *cleanseth us from all sin.*

The result is, that to be made conformable to the death of Christ, we must think highly of it, and not reduce it to the death of a mere martyr. It is a serious thing to make light of the Saviour, and of the work of salvation: *He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy* (or common) *thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!*

Let us observe,

II. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST WAS INDUCED. In these we shall find a blessed example to imitate. They may all be summed up in *love;* love to God and men; love great, disinterested, and unparalleled.

There never was such an example of the *love of God,* as that which is furnished by the obedience and death of Christ. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father. He did not know his nearest relations, but as doing his Father's will. When the bitter cup was presented to him, he said, *Now is my soul troubled;*

and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. What was this but exposing his breast, as we should say to the sword of justice: consenting to be made a sacrifice, that God might be glorified in the salvation of sinners? It was love, working in a way of grief, that caused that affecting exclamation, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He could endure the cross, and even despise the shame; he could bear to be betrayed, denied, and forsaken by his own disciples: but to be forsaken of God, wounded him beyond any thing. O to be made conformable to his death in these things; to love God, so as to account it our meat and drink to do his will; so as to reckon his friends our friends, and his cause our cause; to be willing to do any thing, or suffer any thing, for his name's sake; and to feel the withholding of his favour our severest loss!

As there never was such love to God, as that which was manifested by Christ, so neither was there ever such *love to men. He loved us, and gave* HIMSELF *for us—loved us, and washed us from our sins* IN HIS OWN BLOOD. The love of creatures is ordinarily founded on something lovely in the object; but Christ died for us, while we were yet enemies. To be made conformable to his death in this, is to bear good will to men, to seek their present and everlasting welfare in every way that is within our power; and this, notwithstanding the unloveliness of their character and conduct: *Love them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* Unbelievers, who know no principle superior to self-love, have represented this precept of our Lord as unnatural and extravagant. Yet they themselves are daily partaking of his bounty, who causeth his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust. If they were the children of that Being whom they acknowledge, they would in some degree resemble him. Such was the example of Jesus, and such must be ours, if we be made conformable to him.

Let us observe,

III. THE SPIRIT WITH WHICH THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST WERE ENDURED. In this we shall find a model for our spirit. The Lord Jesus was possessed of all the original passions of

human nature ; as love, joy, sorrow, grief, anger, indignation, &c. When reproached and injured, he felt it ; his *enduring the cross and despising the shame*, was not owing to his being insensible to either, but to *the joy set before him*. The purity of his nature did not extinguish its passions, but rendered them subordinate to the will of his Father. With the greatest sensibility to reproach and injury, he was meek and lowly of heart. Under all the reproaches and false accusations that were preferred against him on his trial, he preserved a dignified silence: not a word was uttered tending to save his life; but, when questioned on the truth of his Messiahship, he, with equal dignity and firmness, avowed it, though he knew the avowal would cost him his life. Nor did the contradiction and abuse which he received from his executioners extinguish his compassion toward them : while they were nailing him to the cross he prayed, saying, *Father forgive them: for they know not what they do.*

If we observe the spirit of the apostles, we shall find them to have made him their pattern : *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day.* There appears to have been a holy emulation in the apostle Paul to be a follower of his Lord, even unto death. In all that befel him, he kept his eye on Christ: *If we suffer, we shall also reign* WITH HIM.—*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed,* ALWAYS BEARING ABOUT IN THE BODY THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS, *that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* Such was that conformity to the death of Christ, after which he panted with the most vehement desire. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than partaking with him in the work of redemption ; but, so far as fellowship in his sufferings was admissible, it was the object of his most ardent desire. O to be thus made like him, and like his faithful followers !

We proceed to observe,

IV. THE ENDS WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED. In them, though there is much which is peculiar to himself, yet there is also much in which we are made conformable to him.

Did he *satisfy divine justice*, and thereby open the way of salvation? Certainly, it is not for us to attempt any thing like this; but, by believing in him, we *acquiesce* in what he has done and suffered, and so are made conformable to it. Nor is this confined to our first believing: the more we know of Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, the more we are, in this way, made conformable to his death. The death of Christ will give the impression to the very enjoyment of heaven. *The Lamb that was slain* will be the theme of the song forever.

Was he *manifested to destroy the works of the devil?* If we be made conformable to his death, we also shall wage war with them. If we live in sin, we are *of the devil*, and must needs be at variance with the death of Christ; sparing that which he was manifested in human nature to destroy. The finished work of Christ upon the cross did not supercede the necessity of our being active in overcoming evil. We must set our feet upon the necks of these spiritual enemies, taking a part in their destruction. Neither did it supercede the necessity of our active perseverance in the use of all means by which we may disengage our souls from the entanglements of sin, praying and struggling from under its dominion, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It is thus that we have to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;* and which, instead of superceding the death of Christ, is being made conformable to it. From his having died *for* sin, we are exhorted to die *to* it, and to live unto God. We cannot enter into the end of Christ's death, which was to make an end of sin, unless we become dead to sin; nor into his resurrection, without rising with him into newness of life.

In waging war with sin, it is necessary to begin with ourselves, but not to end there. If we be made conformable to the death of Christ, we shall be adverse to sin wherever we find it; avoiding all participation in it, through complaisance or worldly interest,

and uniting to promote sobriety, righteousness, and godliness in its place.

Finally: Christ died *to save sinners;* and, if we be made conformable to his death, we also shall seek their salvation. Some of the first thoughts which occur to a believer's mind, on having found rest for his own soul, respect the salvation of his kindred and acquaintance; and the direction given to one who had obtained mercy gives countenance to such thoughts and desires: *Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

It is not for ministers only to take an interest in the salvation of men: the army of the Lamb is composed of the whole body of Christians. Every disciple of Jesus should consider himself as a missionary. All, indeed, are not apostles, nor evangelists, nor preachers; but all must be engaged in serving the Lord; some by preaching, some by contributing of their substance, and all by prayer and recommending the Saviour by a holy conversation.

The death of Christ stands connected, in the divine promise, with the salvation of sinners. This is *the travail of his soul,* which he was to see, and be satisfied; the *joy set before him,* in view of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. To be made conformable unto his death, therefore, we must combine that which God has combined with it. It is a high honour conferred on us to be instruments in thus saving our fellow-sinners, and in thus crowning our Redeemer: nor will it be less advantageous to us, since he has said, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

THE LIFE OF CHRIST THE SECURITY AND FELICITY OF HIS CHURCH.

SERMON XXIII.

REV. i. 18.

I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

SOME of the most important writings in the church of Christ have been occasioned by the persecutions of its enemies. The Psalms of David, in which a good man will find all the devout feelings of his heart pourtrayed, were mostly occasioned by the oppositions of the wicked. Many of Paul's Epistles were written from prison; and this book, which contains a system of prophecy from the ascension of Christ to the end of time, was communicated to the beloved disciple, when in a state of banishment. Thus it is that the wrath of man is made to praise God; so much of it as would not answer this end is restrained.

Some of the most distinguished prophets under the Old Testament were introduced to their work by an extraordinary and impressive vision. It was thus with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and thus it was with the writer of this book. They beheld the glory of Jehovah in a manner suitable to the dispensation under which they lived; he, being under a new dispensation, of which

Christ was exalted to be the head, saw his glory both divine and human; as the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, and as the Son of Man walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

On seeing him, the Apostle fell at his feet as dead. He on whose bosom he could formerly lean with all the familiarity of a friend, is now possessed of a glory too great to be sustained by a mortal man. But yet how sweetly is this awful grandeur tempered with gentleness and goodness: *He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

The force and beauty of the passage will appear to advantage, if we observe the circumstances of the church and of the Apostle at the time. It is supposed to be about the year 95, under the persecution of Domitian. The church, at that time, was under a dark cloud. Great numbers of the first Christians and the first ministers would now have finished their course; many would be cut off by the persecution; all the apostles were dead, excepting John; and he was banished. To an eye of sense it would appear as if the cause must be crushed. How cheering, in such circumstances, must it have been to be told, *I am he that liveth!* The Assyrian invasion, in the time of Hezekiah, filled the breadth of Immanuel's land; but while Jerusalem was preserved, the head was above water, and the body politic, though overflowed even to the neck, would yet live. Much more would the church in the midst of persecution. While Christ her head lived, she could not die.

It was *on the Lord's day*, that the Apostle was favoured with this extraordinary vision, the day in which he had risen from the dead; which circumstance would add force to what he said of himself as having been dead, but as being now alive. It was the day also in which, as far as their persecuted state would admit, the churches were assembled for Christian worship; and while they, doubtless, remembered the venerable Apostle in their prayers, the Lord, by him, remembered and provided for them.

There is a charming circumlocution in the passage, which surprises and overwhelms the mind. The Lord might have said, as on a former occasion, *Be not afraid, it is I;* but he describes himself in language full of the richest consolation: *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death!*

Let us observe the characters which our Lord assumes; consider them as a ground of security to the church; and conclude with a few reflections.

I. Let us observe THE CHARACTERS WHICH OUR LORD ASSUMES. The words contain four positions; viz. that he liveth; that he liveth who was dead; that he liveth forevermore; and that he has the keys of hell and of death.

1. He saith, *I am he that* LIVETH. It is a truth that Christ liveth, and always did and will live as *the first and the last;* but the life here spoken of, being that which succeeded to his death, was possessed in the same nature as that in which he died. It was the life which commenced at his resurrection; when, *being raised from the dead, he dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him.* It consists, not merely in existence, but in that *blessing, and honour, and glory,* which he received as the reward of his humiliation. Is is the possession of that joy that was set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame.

There appears to be something more in the words *I am he that liveth,* than if it had been said *I live;* for this had been true of millions as well as of Christ, whereas that which is spoken is something peculiar to him. Paul says of himself *I live;* but when he had said it, he, in a manner, recalled his words, adding, *yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* Christ is not only possessed of life himself, but communicates it to others: his life involves that of the church, and of every individual believer in him. In his life they live, and will live forevermore.

In the life of Christ we trace the execution of the great designs of his death. It is as *living* that he intercedes for us at the right hand of God. *If,* says the Apostle Paul, *when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being*

reconciled, we shall be saved by his LIFE. We see here three distinct stages in the work of Christ. First: By his death he made atonement for us: this is expressed by his having *reconciled us to God*, or restored us to his favour as the lawgiver and judge of the world. Secondly: By his word and Spirit we are subdued to the obedience of faith, so as, of enemies, to become friends: this is expressed by our *being reconciled*, or brought into a state of actual peace and friendship with God. Thirdly: By his *life* he saves us: this is that branch of salvation which is effected by his intercession, and which is denominated saving us to the *uttermost*. From the first two, the Apostle argues the last, as from what Christ did for us when enemies to what he will do for us now that we are friends, and from his having begun the work to carrying it on to perfection.

In the *life* of Christ we trace all the important blessings of his reign. The promise of the *sure mercies of David* is alleged, by the Apostle as a proof of the resurrection of Christ. But how does this appear? By *the sure mercies of David*, as promised in the 55th of Isaiah, there is, doubtless, a reference to the covenant made with David, *ordered in all things and sure*, and which contained all his salvation, and all his desire. But this covenant was to be fulfilled in the everlasting kingdom of Christ. *The sure mercies of David*, therefore, are the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, the bestowment of which implies his resurrection; for, if death had continued to have dominion over him, no such kingdom could have existed. The sum is, that, in saying to his servant John, *I am he that liveth*, he furnished one of the richest sources of consolation to the church in its state of tribulation.

2. He speaks of his life as succeeding to his death: *I am he that liveth*, AND WAS DEAD. This part of the description would remove all doubts, if any existed, as to who he was. The disparity between his present appearance and what he was when the Apostle saw and conversed with him in the flesh, must be exceedingly great, and might tend to stagger his belief in his being the same person; but this speech, whatever doubts he felt, would at once remove them. 'Yes, it is my Lord himself, and not another. It is he whom I saw expire upon the cross!'

The connexion between the death of Christ on earth and his succeeding life in glory, renders each of them more interesting. There is great joy derived from the consideration of salvation through the *death* of Christ. It is the burden of the heavenly song. But this would be no joy, were it not for the consideration of his life. What if we could all have obtained salvation; yet, if it must have been at the expense of the everlasting blessedness of our deliverer, who could have enjoyed it? What would the feast be, if the Lord of the feast were not there? Though, in enduring the death of the cross, he had *spoiled principalities and powers*, and *made a show of them openly;* yet, if he had not lived to enjoy his triumphs, what would they have been to the redeemed, and even to the angelic world? If the King's Son had been lost, the victory of that day would have been turned into mourning. If it had been possible for him to be holden of death, the loss to the moral empire of God must have exceeded the gain, and the saved themselves must have been ashamed to appear in heaven at the expense of the general good! But we are not called to so painful a trial. Our salvation, expensive as it was, was not at this expense. He *was dead*, but he liveth! *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!*

And as the life of Christ adds to the joy arising from his death, so the death of Christ adds to the joy arising from his life. There is great joy as we have seen, derived from his life; but it would not be what it is, if this his life had not succeeded his death. The life of Isaac was dear to Abraham before he attempted to offer him up a sacrifice; but it would be much more so when he had received him *as from the dead.* The life of Joseph was dear to Jacob, when he dwelt with him in the vale of Hebron; but it would be much more so after his having, in a manner, burried him. If Christ had never divested himself of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, it would not have been to us that which it will be. The very angels, though he died not for them, nor for any of their species, yet honour him as *the Lamb that was slain*, And as to the Redeemed themselves, their song is sweeter

still: *Thou art worthy*, say they, *for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.*

3. He describes himself not only as *he that liveth, and was dead, but as being* ALIVE FOR EVERMORE. He was raised, not only to life, but to an immortal life. *He dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him.* This cheering truth arises from the *perfection* of his sacrifice. The sacrifices under the law could not take away sin, but were mere shadows of good things to come, and therefore required to be often repeated; but the sacrifice of Christ was ONCE *for all.* The scriptures lay great stress on the term *once*, as applied to the sacrifice of Christ: it is used no less than six times in this connexion: *Christ being raised from the dead*, saith the Apostle, *dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him;* and thus he accounts for it,—*For in that he died, he died unto sin* ONCE: *but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* A transient suffering in so divine a person was sufficient to expiate that which would have subjected us to everlasting punishment, and to lay the foundation of a permanent life with God, both for himself and for all those who believe in him. Such was the value of his sacrifice, that its influence will continue for ever. Even when the work of mediation shall be perfected, and the kingdom, as mediatorial, *delivered up to the Father, that God may be all in all.* Christ will live, and be the life of the church for ever. In that state where there will be *no temple*, the Lord God Almighty *and the Lamb* are said to be the temple thereof; and the reason given for there being no need of the sun, nor of the moon, is, that the glory of God will lighten it, and *the Lamb* will be the light thereof.

The *Amen*, which follows this part of the description, seems to be added by the Apostle, and designed to express the satisfaction that he felt in the life of Christ. The words, 'O King, live for ever,' as addressed to an Asiatic sovereign, could only express the wish of the party that his life might be continued; and that in most cases, was mere flattery: but here is neither flattery or hyperbole. The Lord declares that he lives for ever, and the Apostle adds to it his cordial *Amen!*

4. He declares the authority with which he is invested: *And have the keys of hell and of death.* By *hell and death*, I understand the powers of the invisible world, which in reward of his humiliation and death, were put under his control. God *raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.—Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.* Hell, with all its machinations, can do no more than he permits; and death, with all its terrors, comes and goes at his bidding.

But why are hell and death *only* mentioned as subjected to Christ? Does not his empire extend to the church as well as to the world, and to the visible as well as to the invisible powers? Certainly it does: all power in heaven and earth is given to him: but there was a fitness in his here mentioning that part only of his empire which was hostile to the church, and that kind of hostility which, at the time, threatened to destroy it. Persecution is the storming work of hell and of death on the strong holds of Zion. Hell furnishes the plan, and death carries it into execution. Men, indeed, have a concern in what is done against the church; but it is as agents of the wicked one: the visible world, therefore, may be overlooked as being influenced by the invisible. To control an army it is sufficient to control those that influence its movements.

II. LET US CONSIDER THESE INTERESTING CHARACTERS AS A SOURCE OF SECURITY AND FELICITY TO THE CHURCH. The existence of the church in this depraved world is one of the wonders of Providence. It is a vessel living in a tempestuous sea; a bush on fire, yet not consumed. If we reflect on the enmity of the wicked against the righteous, their great superiority over them, the attempts that have been made to exterminate them, the frequent diminution of their numbers by defection and death; their existence, and especially their increase, must be wonderful, and can no otherwise be accounted for but that Christ liveth.

When they were few in number, and wandered as strangers from one nation to another, he suffered no man to hurt them; *he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.* In Egypt he saw their affliction, and came down to deliver them. Of Jerusalem the enemy said, *Rase it, rase it to the foundation;* but the Lord remembered it, and destroyed its destoyer. Under the Persian dominion, the captives were restored to their own land; yet even then the enemy intrigued against them; so that for one and twenty years the building of the temple was hindered, and the prayers of the prophet Daniel were unanswered. Thus it was, I conceive, that *the prince of the kingdom of Persia* withstood the angel for *one and twenty days:* but lo, Michael the chief prince stood with him and helped him.*

Under the gospel dispensation, as the church became more spiritual, the hatred increased; and as religion was, from hence, more of a personal than a national concern, such was the opposition directed against it. But still the great Head of the church lived. The persecution which raged at the time of this prophecy was the second of ten cruel persecutions from the heathen emperors; and though, after this, the government became professedly Christian, yet such were the corruptions which entered in at this door, that in a little time that which was called the Christian church became an antichristian harlot, persecuting the servants of Jesus, with a cruelty, equal, if not superior, to that of heathens. These floods filled the breadth of Immanuel's land, reaching even

* Dan. x. 13. 21. Prideaux reckons, from the first interruption of the Jews in rebuilding the temple to the last sentence of Darius in their favour, only *twenty years*; namely, from the third year of Cyrus to the eighth of Darius Hystaspis; but from Dan. x. 1—4. it appears, that, though the opposition openly commenced in the third year, yet it had been at work in the second. It was within three days of the beginning of the third year, that the prophet began to mourn; if one cause of this mourning, therefore, was the obstruction to the work of God at Jerusalem, it must have begun in the second year; which makes it twenty-one years, corresponding with the *three full weeks* of the prophet's mourning, and with the *one and twenty days* of the angel's detention, according to the usual prophetic reckoning, a day for a year.

to the neck; but the church's Head being above water, she has survived them all.

Often have we seen, in our smaller circles, the cause of God reduced to a low condition; sometimes by the falling away of Characters who seemed to be pillars, and sometimes by the removal of great and good men by death. But under all this it is our comfort, the Lord liveth—the government is on his shoulder.

Finally: The life of Christ involves not only the security of the church on earth, but its felicity in heaven. The members being united with the head, their life is bound up with his life. Even in the present world, if one says, *I live*, he must recollect himself, with the Apostle, and add, *Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:* but if it be so in respect of spiritual life in this world, it will be so as to eternal life in the world to come. Every thing which our Lord did and suffered was for us; and every degree of glory that he possesses in reward of it is for us: for us he became incarnate, died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and liveth at the right hand of God. *Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

From the whole, we see, First; That the way to everlasting life is to believe in Jesus. The way of life, according to the tenor of the first covenant, was, *The man which doeth these things shall live by them:* but the way of life to a sinner is, *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* It is as believing in the Son of God that we are interested in him, and having him, have everlasting life. We have, in the life of Christ, the greatest possible encouragement to believe in him and be saved; for it is as ever living to make intercession for us, that he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him.

O my hearers! this is the hinge on which our salvation or damnation turns. To refuse him in favour of your own righteousness, or of any other idol, is to refuse life; and to hate him, is to love death. The question put to the house of Israel is no less applicable to you than it was to them, *Why will ye die?* Those who

believe not in him are as unwilling to come to him that they may have life, as the house of Israel were to cast away their transgressions. God has no more pleasure in the death of him that dieth eternally, than he had in the death of those who perished under some temporal calamity; nor is the one any more at variance with the doctrine of election than the other was with the doctrine of decrees in general, or of God's doing all things after the counsel of his own will.*

Secondly: The same truth, like the cloud in the wilderness, wears a bright side to believers, and a dark side to unbelievers. The life of Christ will be the death of his enemies. To behold him coming in the clouds of heaven, invested with the keys of hell and of death, must fill their hearts with dismay. The same power that has so often shut the door of destruction against his servants, so as to forbid their entrance, will shut it upon his enemies, so as to leave no hope of escape.

* The doctrine of *free will*, as opposed to that of *free grace*, is not, that, in doing good, we act according to our choice, and require to be exhorted to it, and warned against the contrary; this is manifestly scriptural and proper: but that it is owing to our free will that we are disposed to choose the good and refuse the evil; if not to the exclusion of divine grace, yet to the rendering it effectual by properly improving it, and so to *making ourselves to differ*.

SERMON XXIV.

1 JOHN ii. 1.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

WHEN our Saviour ascended up on high, his disciples, who were looking steadfastly toward heaven after him, were thus accosted by the angels, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* It might seem, by this language, that whatever our Lord might do for us in the intermediate period, it was not for us to be made acquainted with it. And it has been suggested, that we are ignorant not only of "the place where he resides, but of the occupations in which he is engaged."* There is, indeed, nothing revealed on these subjects to gratify curiosity; but much to satisfy faith. If we know not God, we may be expected to think lightly of sin, and meanly of the Saviour; and if, in consequence of this

* Mr. Belsham's Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, p. 85.

we disown his atonement, and perceive no need of his intercession and advocateship with the Father, there will be nothing surprising in it. With such a state of mind we might have lived at the time when *God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles believed on in the world received up into glory*, and have been no more interested by any of these events, than were the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation. But, if we entertain just sentiments of the moral character and government of God, we shall perceive the evil of sin and the need of a divine Saviour, shall consider his atonement as the only ground of a sinner's hope, and his intercession and advocateship with the Father as necessary to our being saved to the uttermost.

To satisfy ourselves that such were the sentiments of the apostles, it is sufficient candidly to read their writings. If their authority be rejected, so it must be; but it is vain to attempt to disguise their meaning. And, before we reject their authority, it will be well to consider the force of their testimony concerning themselves and their doctrine: *We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* They were either what they professed to be, or presumptuous impostors; and what they said of hearing their doctrine as a test of being *of God*, was either true, or they were false witnesses of God; and as all that we know of Christ is from their writings and those of the evangelists, if theirs be false witness, Christianity itself has nothto authenticate it.

My little children, said the venerable Apostle, *these things write I unto you that ye sin not.* This is the bearing of all my writings, as well as of all my other labours. Yet, while I warn you against sin, knowing that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not, let me remind you, that *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Such is the doctrine of the Apostle, *an antidote both to presumption and despair.* He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear it.

Let us observe,

I. THE GENERAL CHARGE WHICH CHRISTIANITY GIVES TO ITS ADHERENTS: *These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* This is to repress *presumption.* This is the bearing not only of the writings of John, but of the whole scriptures: this is the object at which every doctrine and every precept aims.

It may be thought, and has sometimes been said, that 'all religions tend to make men better,' and, therefore, that this property of the Apostle's doctrine has nothing peculiar in it. But this is a gratuitous assumption. All religions do not tend to make men better; but, many of them, much worse. Nay, so far is this assumption from being true, that Christianity is the only religion, that, strictly speaking, is opposed to sin. That men of all religions have paid some attention to morals is true; but, in doing so, they have not been influenced so much by their religion as by the necessity which all men feel of maintaining somewhat of a correct conduct towards one another. As to sin against God, there is no religion but that of the Bible that pays any regard to it. And even Christianity itself, in so far as it is corrupted, loses this property. Every system of religion may be known by this, whether it be of God, or not. If it delight in calling sin by extenuating names; or represent repentance and good works as sufficient to atone for it; or prescribe ceremonial remedies for allaying the remorse which it produces; it makes light of sin, and is not of God. Every doctrine and precept in the Bible makes much of sin; and this is as much a distinguishing peculiarity of the true religion, as any principle that can be named.

Some doctrines are directly of a *warning* nature. Are we taught, for instance, the omniscience and omnipresence of God? What can be more pungent than such sentiments as these? *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.—Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;—if I take the*

wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. Every sentiment here, saith to us, *Sin not.* Are we taught the *holiness* of God? It is that we may be holy: *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?—Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.* Such is the object of all the divine *precepts* and *threatenings.* Let us seriously read the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and ask ourselves, What could induce the kindest and best of Beings thus strictly to enjoin his will, and thus to scatter his curses against the breach of it? Finally: Such is the object of all the accounts of *justice and judgments* as executed on transgressors. The histories of the flood; of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; of the plagues of Egypt, and the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red sea; of the punishments on the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness; of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, first by the Chaldeans, and afterwards by the Romans; all speak one language; all are written to us that we *sin not.*

There is another set of scripture-truths which are of a *consolatory* nature; yet they are aimed at the same thing. For what purpose was the Son of God manifested in human nature? Was it not that he might destroy the works of the devil? To what are we elected? That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. To what are we predestinated? That we might be conformed to the image of his Son. Why did he give himself for us: but that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? Why are we called out of a state of darkness into his marvellous light, but that we might walk as children of light? Of what use are the exceeding great and precious promises of the scriptures? Is it not that, having them, we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God? That is not Christianity that does not operate in this way. He that sinneth habitually is of the devil, and hath not seen or known God. Wicked men seek a system of religion which may consist with

their lusts; and God, in righteous judgment, often suffers them to find it; but it is not the gospel: the language of the gospel is, These things are written to you, that ye sin not!

The scriptures guard the doctrine of grace, not indeed by limiting its operations to lesser sinners, but by insisting on its mortifying and sanctifying effects. The Apostle Paul, notwithstanding all that he had written on justification by faith, exempts none from condemnation, but those that were in Christ Jesus; and admits none to be in Christ Jesus, but those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He still declared, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.* There is a *universality* pertaining to true holiness, which distinguishes it from all that is spurious. We must be *holy in* ALL MANNER OF CONVERSATION, or there is no real holiness in us. A single *wicked way* will lead to destruction. The certain perseverance of the saints is not, that a person, having once believed, whether he depart from God or not, shall be finally saved: but, that God having put his fear in his heart, he shall not be suffered wholly to depart from him. If any man, therefore, depart utterly from God, he ought to conclude, that the fear of God was not in him. If the blossom go up as the dust, the root was rottenness. If, in times of temptation, we fall away, it is because we have no root in ourselves. *If*, says the Apostle John, *they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* Even our *partial* departures from God must render our state doubtful. When the Galatians doubted the gospel, the Apostle stood in doubt of them; declaring he was afraid of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. And had they judged according to evidence, as he did, they must have stood in doubt of themselves. To represent, as some do, that doubts and fears of this kind are the temptations of Satan, or the workings of unbelief, and require to be resisted, as that which is dishonourable to God, is to promote the most dangerous delusion, and to bring the blood of souls upon their own heads. The things which they call the temptations of Satan may be found to be the dictates of an awakened conscience, which they endeavour to lull asleep. Doubts of the goodness or veracity of God, or of the all-sufficiency or willingness

of the Saviour to receive those that come to him are, indeed, dishonourable to God; but doubts of our own sincerity, founded upon our departures in heart and conduct from him, are so far from being sinful, that they are necessary to awaken us to self-examination. Thus the Corinthians, who had sunk into many and great evils, were called upon, not to hold fast the persuasion that, notwithstanding this, their state was safe; but to examine themselves whether they were in the faith, and to prove their ownselves; and assured that, except indeed they were reprobates, or disapproved of God, *Jesus Christ was in them*—that is, by his word and Spirit, bringing forth fruit.

We proceed to observe,

II. THE SPECIFIC PROVISION FOR THEIR FAULTS AND FAILINGS: *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* This is to prevent *despair.*

It is here supposed, that though it is the habitual aim of true Christians not to sin, yet, in this world, they are not free from it. Some have fallen into grievous sins, as we too well know, from scripture, observation, and, in many instances, from painful experience. Others, who have not fallen so as either to disgrace themselves or the name of Christ, yet have much sin wherewith to reproach themselves, in deeds, or words, or unlawful desires. The petition in the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our trespasses*, shows that we sin, and need forgiveness, as often as we need our daily bread. If any man imagine himself to have arrived to sinless perfection, he must be wofully blind to the spirituality of the divine law, and to the extent of his obligations. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Farther: It is here suggested, that, whatever be our sin, yet, if we confess it with a contrite heart, and believe in Jesus who died for sinners, and rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father, he will be our advocate, and our sins shall be forgiven for his sake. It was in this way that David was forgiven. It is true, Christ had not then died, nor risen, nor ascended to be the advocate with the Father; but, in his penitential prayer, he believed in him according to the light that he possessed, and which might be much greater than we imagine. His prayer to be purged with hyssop,

doubtless, alluded to the purgations under the law, by dipping a bunch of hyssop in blood, and sprinkling it upon the unclean: but, as none of these ceremonial cleansings were admissible in cases of adultery or murder, he cannot be understood as speaking literally. He must, therefore, have believed in a purgation of which this was only a shadow.

It was in this way that the Israelites were forgiven, when praying with their hands spread towards the temple. It was not to the building that they directed their prayer, but to Him who dwelt therein, between the cherubim, upon the *mercy-seat*. It was to the Lord God of Israel, as thus dwelling upon the *mercy-seat*, that Jonah, at the last extremity, looked and lived: *Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.*

In this way, whatever sins we have committed, we must seek for mercy; and, for our encouragement, we are assured of an *advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

But here we must be a little more particular. Here are three parties concerned; the Father, the criminal who has sinned against him, and the Advocate who undertakes his cause. The *Father*, in this case, sustains the character of a Judge: *God the Judge of all.* The *criminal* is supposed to stand before the judgment-seat; not, however, in an impenitent state of mind, but like Job, when he said, *Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.—I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!* Or like David, when he said, *I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against* THEE, THEE ONLY, *have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest!* Here comes in the *Advocate.* The sinner could not be heard for himself, nor pardoned in his own name but, believing in Christ, HE undertakes to plead his cause. He had said himself, in effect, 'Do not condemn me!' To this the Advocate adds, 'Do not condemn him!'

On this part of the subject, we must be still more particular. An Advocate, especially one that undertakes the cause of sinners,

requires to have an interest with the Judge; to be interested for the sinner; while pleading for him, not to palliate, but condemn his sin; to be fully acquainted with his case; and to have something to plead that shall effectually overbalance his unworthiness. Let us inquire, whether all these qualifications be not found in our *Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

1. *He has the highest interest in the favour of the Judge.* For why? He is the only begotten Son, who dwelleth in his bosom, and who never offended him at any time, but always did that which was pleasing in his sight. So well pleased was the Father with his obedience unto death, that he highly exalted him, giving him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.* Well might he say, when on earth, *I knew that thou hearest me always;* for he had, in prophecy, invited him to prefer his request: *Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* Who can doubt the success of a cause in the hands of such an advocate?

2. *He is deeply interested in favour of the sinner.* If we had to be tried before an earthly tribunal, and wished to engage an advocate, we should certainly prefer one that would so identify himself with us as to be deeply interested in the issue. When, at Horeb, Moses pleaded for Israel to be forgiven, he requested to die rather than not succeed: *Oh,* said he, *this people have sinned a great sin,—yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written!* This was the true spirit of an advocate; and he succeeded. But our Advocate has gone farther than *requesting* to die: he actually died for us; and his death *is the propitiation for our sins,* on which his advocateship is founded.

3. *While pleading for sinners, he does not palliate, but condemns their sin.* If Moses had attempted to apologize for Israel's idolatry, his interposition must have been rejected. And if it had been possible for Christ himself to have been an advocate for sin, he

could not have been heard. But he was no less averse from sin than the Judge himself. If he was made *in the likeness* of sinful flesh, yet was there no participation of it. Though he descended and lived among sinners, yet, in respect of character, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from them. While advocating their cause, it was in his own proper character of *Jesus Christ* THE RIGHTEOUS. It was because of his proceeding on these just and honourable principles, that the Father approved and honoured him: *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

4. *He is perfectly acquainted with the case of those whose cause he undertakes.* There are cases, which, if the advocate had known all, he would not have undertaken; and which, for want of his being in possession of the whole truth, fail in his hands. But our advocate knows the worst of us. He needs not that any should testify of man; for he knows what is in man. When Simon the Pharisee saw a woman that was a sinner standing at the feet of Jesus, washing them with her tears, wiping them with the hairs of her head, kissing them, and anointing them with the ointment, and all this without receiving any repulse from him; he suspected that he was *deceived*, and concluded in his own mind, that he could not be that prophet that should come into the world. Had he known her true character, he supposed he would not have permitted her to touch him! To convince Simon that he was not ignorant of *her* character, he, by answering his private thoughts, proved himself to be fully *his;* and proceeded to plead the cause of the penitent sinner, though her sins were many, and to justify himself in receiving and forgiving her.

Our Advocate not only knows all our sins, but *all our wants;* and therefore knows how to provide for them. If previous to the prayer for Peter, it had been referred to him what should be asked on his behalf, having no suspicion of any peculiar temptation being at hand, he might not have been able to say what it was that he most needed. But his Advocate knowing the temptation that awaited him, framed his plan on his behalf accordingly: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.*

5. *Though he finds no worthiness in the sinner, on which to ground his pleas, but the greatest unworthiness, yet he has that to plead which effectually overbalances it.* It is remarkable, that in that admirable speech of Judah on behalf of Benjamin, he did not fetch his pleas from the innocence of the young man, nor from the possibility of the cup being in his sack without his knowledge, nor from the smallness of his offence ; but from his father's love to him, and his own engagements to bring him, and set him before him! I need not say that on this principle our Advocate has proceeded. The charges against Benjamin were mysterious and doubtful, yet, as Judah could not prove his innocence, he admitted his guilt. But our guilt is beyond doubt ; in pleading our cause, the Advocate is supposed to rest it on the propitiation, in consideration of which, our unworthiness is passed over, and our sins are forgiven. The connexion of things is often signified by the order of time in which they occur. Thus the out-pouring of the Spirit, that it might appear to be what it was, a fruit of the death of Christ, followed immediately after it : and thus, on his having died, and risen from the dead, his followers are directed to pray *in his name.* His directing us to pray in his name conveys the same idea as to the meritorious cause of forgiveness, as his being our Advocate with the Father on the ground of his propitiation.

From the whole : *We are directed to commit our cause to Christ.* We have a cause pending, which, if lost, all is lost with us, and that forever. We shall not be able to plead it ourselves ; for every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Nor can any one in heaven or earth, besides the Saviour, be heard on our behalf. If we believe in him, we have everlasting life : but, if not, we shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on us.

We are also directed, by this subject, how to obtain relief under the numerous sins to which we are subject as we pass through life. We all have recourse to some expedient or other to relieve our consciences, when oppressed with guilt. Some endeavour to lose the recollection of it among the cares, company, or amusements of the world ; others have recourse to ceremonial

observances, and are very strict in some things, hoping thereby to obtain forgiveness for others; on some the death and advocateship of Christ have the effect to render them unconcerned, and even to embolden them in their sins. Painful as our burdens are, we had better retain them, than get relief in any of these methods. The only way is, to come unto God in the spirit of Job, or of David, before referred to, seeking mercy through the propitiation. Thus, while we plead, 'Do not condemn me!' our Advocate will take it up, and add, 'Do not condemn him!'

Finally: From the all-sufficiency of the propitiation, there is no room for despair. When Jonah was cast into the sea, and swallowed by the fish, still retaining his consciousness, he concluded that all was over with him: *I said I am cast out of thy sight; yet*, even in this condition, the thought occurred, *I will look again toward thy holy temple.* His body was confined, but his mind could glance a thought toward the mercy-seat, from whence he had heretofore received relief. He looked and lived. Let this be our determination, whatever be our circumstances or condition. Jesus is *able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

SERMON XXV.

ECCLES. i. 17, 18.

And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.

WE have, in this book, an estimate of human life. Most of the things that are seen under the sun here pass under review; and each, as it passes, is inscribed with vanity.

It may be thought, from the pensive strain of the writer, to be an effusion of melancholy, rather than the result of mature reflection; but it should be considered, that no man had greater capacity and opportunity for forming a just judgment; that the book was written at the most mature period of life; and, what is more, that it was written under divine inspiration.

As *wisdom and knowledge*, in the writings of Solomon, commonly include true religion, so *madness and folly* seem here to be used for irreligion. He studied the nature and effects of both good and evil.

In ascribing *vanity and vexation of spirit* to almost every thing that passed before him, he does not mean, that they were in them-

selves evil, or of little or no value; but that every good had its alloy, or something attached to it which subtracted from it. Thus it was even with *wisdom* and *knowledge*. It is because these were not only good in themselves, but ranked high in the scale of what is estimable, that they are introduced. If the best things pertaining to human life have their alloy, the same must be said of the rest.

In discoursing on the subject, we shall endeavour to show the justness of the remark, and to draw some conclusions from it.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO SHOW THE JUSTNESS OF THE REMARK, OR ITS AGREEMENT WITH UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE. Knowledge may be distinguished, by its objects, into three parts, or branches: the knowledge of men and things about us; the knowledge of ourselves; and the knowledge of God. Each of these is good, and the practical use of it is wisdom; but each has its alloy, subtracting from the enjoyment which it would otherwise afford.

First: Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of men and things about us*. None can deny that the thing itself is good and valuable, and the want of it to be regretted, as an evil: *That the soul be without knowledge it is not good.* It is this which distinguishes men from brutes, and raises some men much higher in the scale of being than others. Minds thus qualified are susceptible of much greater enjoyments than others, and are able to do much more good in their generation than others. The greatest and best things that have been done in the world, have been done, in general, not by the ignorant, but by men of understanding. Yet, with all its advantages, there is that attached to it which increaseth sorrow.

1. He that knows the most of mankind will see the most of their *faults* and *defects*, and so be compelled, upon the whole, to think the worst of them; and this, to a good man, must needs be a source of sorrow. I would by no means wish to cherish a spirit of misanthropy. I remember, in a speech delivered in a very respectable assembly, meeting with this sentiment: 'I think well of man, but ill of men.' On the contrary, I should say, 'I think ill of man, but well of men, till I see cause to think otherwise.' Scripture, observation, and experience concur to justify

me in thinking ill of human nature ; but, as in our world, there is, through the grace and goodness of God, a good number of upright and benevolent characters, it becomes me to hope the best of every man I meet, till I am obliged by his conduct or conversation to form a different judgment; and this I feel to be a principle at a much greater remove from misanthropy than the other.

There are cases, in which the more we know of men, the more we shall see reason to esteem them ; but this is not true of mankind in general. The longer we live, and the more we are acquainted with them, the more evil we shall see in them. The characters of the greater part of men will not bear scrutinizing. If we look but a little below the surface, whether it be in high life or low life, or even in middle life, we shall see enough to sicken our hearts. Many a favourable opinion, formed under the philanthropic feelings of youth, has been obliged to give way to observation and experience ; and many a pleasing dream, into which we have fallen from reading books, has disappeared, when we came to read men.

2. He that knows the most of mankind, will know most of their *miseries;* and, if he be a man of feeling, this must be another source of sorrow. Who can make himself acquainted with the privations and hardships of the afflicted poor, without participating of their sorrows? This may be a reason why some who are in opulent circumstances decline visiting them. They seem to count the cost, not merely what it will require to supply their pecuniary wants, but what they shall lose by a diminution of their pleasure.

If, in addition to the state of the afflicted poor of our own country, we knew the miseries of slavery, would it not increase our sorrow? Who, that has only acquainted himself with the facts which have been established during the late parliamentary discussions on the African slave trade, can forbear weeping over the miseries which the avarice of one part of mankind brings upon another? And if, in addition to this, we knew the miseries of war, must it not still more increase our sorrow? We hear of great battles, on which depend the fate of kingdoms, and rejoice or are sorrowful as they affect the interests of our country ; but did we know

all the individual misery produced by the most glorious victory, how different would be our feelings! Did we hear the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying; could we know the state of mind in which they died; were we acquainted with the near relations of the dead, the widows and orphans that they have left behind them; alas, were we in the midst of them, we might be reduced to the necessity of trying to get away, and to forget them!

If, leaving these scenes of woe, we turn our eyes to the abodes of *ease and opulence*, we shall not find things as we might expect. How often are men envied, when, if we knew all, we should pity them! We form our estimates of human happiness more by appearances than by realities. We little think, how many things are necessary to make us happy, any one of which, if wanting, will render all the rest of little or no account. What are riches and honours and amusements, to one whose life hangs in doubt, from some threatning disorder which he feels to be preying upon his vitals; or to a mind smitten with melancholy, or corroded with remorse; or to one whose peace is destroyed by domestic feuds, jealousies, or intrigues?

3. He that knows most of the *sentiments* of mankind on everlasting subjects, will, if he be a believer in divine revelation, know most of *their devious and destructive tendency;* and this must be a source of sorrow. There is what is called *charity,* that excites no sorrow on this account; but, viewing all religions as nearly alike, all leading to one happy end, it renders the subjects of it quite easy and unconcerned. But *Christian* charity is another thing. It bears good will to all mankind, but does not think lightly of their alienation from God. He that should doubt, whether the sentence passed against a number of traitors was ever designed to be executed, and should persuade them into his way of thinking, might call himself a charitable man; might boast of his own happiness, and the happiness he produced in others; and insist upon it, that by entertaining such views, he did more honour to the government than they who yielded to the gloomy apprehensions of an execution; but if, after all, his opinions should prove false, and be found to have originated in his own disloyalty, would not his charity be considered as cruel, deceitful, and destruc-

tive? The only difference between this and the charity in question is, that the one goes to destroy men's lives, and the other their souls! *Genuine* charity would have endeavoured to convince them of their guilt, and to persuade them to sue for mercy to their justly offended sovereign. He that can view whole nations of men, who from time immemorial, have lived without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world, and not feel a wish to burst their chains, of whatever religion he may profess to be, must himself be in the same state.

To read the *controversies* of former ages, and those of the present age, *even in the Christian world*, must be depressing to a serious mind. He is either perplexed, and tempted to indulge in scepticism; or, if he feels his own ground, still he must perceive great numbers wandering in the paths of error; and who, unless God give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, will continue to wander, notwithstanding all that can be said or written to reclaim them. They that have done the most towards bending the mind of man to that of Christ, and inculcating just sentiments of religion, will find, after all their labour, much remaining undone; so much, both of the devious and the defective, that he may retire with the words of the wise man, *That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered!*

4. He that knows most of *the religious world* will see the most of its *faults* and *imperfections;* and this is another source of sorrow. Among his friends he will find some will prove false, and others fickle; and what is worse, many turning their back on Christ, and walking no more with him. The longer we live in Christian society, and the closer we are connected with it, the more jealousies, envies, evil surmisings, whisperings, and backbitings, we shall discover. Those Christians who have to travel for the gospel, and only see their fellow-christians once in a week, are apt to consider themselves as under great disadvantages; and, in some respects, they certainly are so; but in others, the advantage may be on their side. They do not hear so many sermons, but, having to travel they may be more likely to profit by those which they do hear. They miss much social intercourse; but

they also stand aloof from the evils which frequently attend it. In looking round the place on a Lord's-day, they see their Christian friends, as we say, in their best dress; knowing just enough to love them and pray for them, and to part with them with affectionate regret; while those who are acquainted with their faults, as well as their excellencies, know to the increase of their sorrow.

Once more: He that knows most of the *things of this world*, will feel the greatest portion of *disappointment* from them; and this will be a source of sorrow. Riches, honours, and pleasures promise much, and, while inexperienced, we may hope much; but a thorough trial will convince us, that happiness is not in them. Even knowledge itself, the treasure of the mind, is not only attained with great labour, but is attended with much painful disappointment. "He that makes the greatest researches," as Mr. Poole observes, "often finds himself decieved with knowledge falsely so called; often mistakes error for truth, and is perplexed with manifold doubts, from which ignorant men are free."

Secondly: Let us try the justness of the remark, in respect of *the knowledge of ourselves.* Self-knowledge is, doubtless, good, and of great importance. Without it, whatever else we know, it will turn to but little account: yet this also is accompanied with sorrow. He that knows the most of himself sees most of his own faults and defects. It was by comparing his own mind with the word of God, that David exclaimed, *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.* The more we know of ourselves, the worse we shall think of ourselves. We know but little of ourselves at the outset of the Christian life. We see evils in others, and are shocked at them, and are ready to suppose ourselves incapable of any such things; but, as the Lord led Israel through the wilderness, to humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart, so he deals with us. We have seen rich men high-minded, and may have thought, that if God should give us wealth, how humble and generous we would be with it; we have seen poor men full of envy and discontent, and may have thought, were we in their situation, we would not repine; we have seen men fall in the hour of temptation, and may have joined in heap-

ing censures upon them. If it please God to try us in these ways, it may be to humble us; and the knowledge that we gain may be accompanied with not a little sorrow.

Thirdly: Let us try the justness of the remark, in respect of *the knowledge of God.* No one can suppose but this, in itself, is good, and a source of the highest enjoyment; yet it is no less true, that he that increaseth in it, increaseth in sorrow.

The more we know of God, the more we shall perceive *our contrariety to him.* If like Joshua the high-priest, we were clothed with filthy garments, yet, while surrounded with darkness, and in company with others like ourselves, we should be, in a manner, insensible of it; but, if brought to the light, and introduced to one who was clothed in white raiment, we should feel the disparity. It is thus, that not only those who are strangers to divine revelation, but those who read it without believing it, have no just sense of sin. It was thus that sin, *by the commandment*, became to the Apostle Paul exceeding sinful; and that the prophet Isaiah, on beholding the glory of God, exclaimed, *Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!*

Beside this, the knowledge of God draws upon us the *hatred*, and frequently the *persecutions of wicked men;* which, though we may be supported under them, yet in themselves, must needs be sources of sorrow: *I have given them thy word;* (said our Lord, in committing his disciples to the Father,) *and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

I add, The knowledge of God will in some cases, draw upon us *the envy of false brethren.* If a good man engage in the work of God from the purest principles, and by the divine blessing on his diligence and perseverance, make such progress in useful knowledge as to draw upon himself a portion of public admiration, he may be expected soon to become an object of envy. Men shall rise up who will do their utmost to depreciate and eclipse him. *I considered all travail, and* EVERY RIGHT WORK, THAT FOR THIS A MAN IS ENVIED OF HIS NEIGHBOUR. *This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*

II. LET US DRAW SOME CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SUBJECT. If things be so, some may think we had better be without knowledge, and be contented to live and die in ignorance. This is not the consequence, however, which the writer wished to have drawn from what he wrote. He says, *That the soul be without knowledge it is not good;* and *Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.* He must, therefore, have judged, that, whatever disadvantages attended wisdom and knowledge, the advantages arising from them were far greater. Much of the sorrow arising from a knowledge of ourselves and of God, is to be desired, rather than dreaded; and, as to that which arises from a knowledge of the evils of the world, and even of the church, it is best to know the truth, though it may give us pain. That exemption from sorrow which arises from ignorance is seldom enviable. To know the evils that are to be found among men is necessary, not only to enable us to guard against them, but to know how to deal with them in religious concerns. If we be ignorant of their faults and defects, we shall be at a loss to carry conviction to their minds, and so to make them feel the need of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. So, to be ignorant of the faults and defects of men professing religion, must be injurious both to them and to ourselves. Without knowing the truth concerning them, we cannot reprove them, and so cannot reclaim them. If those of the house of Chloe had not written to Paul on the state of things at Corinth, it would have saved him much sorrow, but then what had been the state of the Corinthians? To all appearance they were in the way to ruin; and so a tribe, as it were, would soon have been lacking in Israel. And as to ourselves, by knowing, in a certain degree, the evils that are to be found, even in the church of Christ, we are better prepared to meet them, and less in danger of being stumbled, or tempted to think the worse of religion, on account of them. By knowing things, in some good degree, as they are, we are enabled to make up our minds. Thus it is that the falls, and even the falling away of some, while it causes much pain, yet does not shake our faith. We learn to think well of religion, let those who profess it prove what they may: *Let God be true, and every man a liar!* And, in knowing

the faults and defects even of sincere Christians, we are not led to think ill of them as Christians, or lightly of Christian communion. If a true friend of his country could say,

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!"

much more will a true friend of the church of Christ consider Christians, with all their faults, as the excellent of the earth; better than the best of worldly men! And, if we love them, it will be in our hearts to live and die with them! Nor is it unnecessary that we should be acquainted with the *miseries* of mankind, whatever sorrow they may occasion: otherwise, we cannot sympathize with them, nor relieve them, nor pray for them, nor feel so great an anxiety for the coming of that kingdom whose healing influence shall remove their sorrows.

Three things, however, are taught us by this subject:

First: *To be moderate in our expectations, as to things pertaining to this life.* If *vexation of spirit* be attached to wisdom and knowledge, what can be expected from less valuable objects? We need but little, nor that little long. The trial made by the wise man, of mirth and pleasure, of building and planting, of the gathering together of silver and gold, &c. is, doubtless, recorded to teach us that substantial good is not to be found in them. The consequence drawn by the Apostle from the brevity of life, is designed to moderate both our attachments and our sorrows. *The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion* (or scenery) *of this world passeth away.*

It may seem, to some, that, if we were to feel and act up to this precept, it would deprive us of half our enjoyments; but this is a mistake. To be moderate in our expectations, is to increase our enjoyment, while the contrary diminishes it. Expectation, raised beyond what truth will support, must be disappointed; and disappointment will imbitter that which, if enjoyed in moderation, would have been sweet: *Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith.*

Secondly: We are taught, hereby, *to seek the favour of God, as the crowning blessing to all our enjoyments.* The vexation of spirit which belongs to the portion of a good man, is not as that which attends the wicked. The first is accompanied with a blessing, the other with a curse: *God giveth to a man that is* GOOD IN HIS SIGHT, *wisdom and knowledge and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather, and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God.* After all the particulars enumerated in the blessing of Joseph, as the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that coucheth; the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon; the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the lasting hills, the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof; the crowning blessing follows—*and the good will of him that dwelt in the bush!* If this be wanting, all the rest will be unsatisfying. If this be on our heads, our sorrows, whatever they be, will be turned into joy.

Thirdly: We are taught, hereby, *to aspire after a state in which good will be enjoyed without any mixture of evil, as a subtraction from it.* If our wisdom be that of which the fear of the Lord is the beginning, and the object of our knowledge be the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, we shall soon reach that state of holiness and blessedness that is without alloy. *Wisdom and knowledge and joy*, will then be given us, and all the sources of sorrow which have been enumerated will be dried up. The more we know of the inhabitants of that world, the better we shall think of them, and the more we shall love them. Among all the nations of the saved we shall not find one whose character will not bear scrutinizing. If every heart were as naked to us, as ours now are to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, we should find nothing in them but love. No hypocrisies will be there, nor envies, nor jealousies, nor hard thoughts, nor evil surmisings, to imbitter the cup of joy. No surrounding miseries shall damp our bliss; no error shall throw a mist over our minds, or lead us aside from God. And what is still more, no imperfections shall mar our services, nor indwelling sins pollute our souls. To this blessed state may we, by all the sorrows of the present life, be led unremittingly to bend our course?

SERMON XXVI.

Rom. viii. 18—23.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope: because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

There is, in this part of the Epistle, a richness of sentiment and a vast compass of thought. The Apostle, having established the great doctrine of justification by faith, dwells here on things connected with it; some of which are designed to guard it against abuse, and others to show its great importance. *There is, therefore, now no condemnation*, says he, *to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Having thus entered on the privileges of believers, the sacred writer is borne away, as by a mighty tide, with the greatness of his theme. *Heirs of God!*

what an inheritance! Such is the tenor of the covenant of grace: *I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Joint-heirs with Christ!* what a title! We possess the inheritance not in our own right, but in that of Christ; who, being *heir of all things*, looketh down on his conflicting servants, and saith, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* It is true, we must suffer a while; but, if it be *with him*, we shall be glorified together.

By *the glory to be revealed in us*, is meant, not that glory which we shall receive at death, but the consummation of it at the resurrection. It is the same as that which in the following verses, is called *the manifestation of the sons of God—the glorious liberty of the children of God—the adoption to wit, the redemption of our body. It is that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, for which Christians are taught to look; that *grace* in pursuit of which we are exhorted to *gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, and hope to the end*; and which is to be brought unto us *at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

On this great inheritance, to which the sons of God are heirs, the Apostle enlarges in the words of the text. It is an object of such magnitude, says he, that all the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with it; of such magnitude as to interest the whole creation; and, finally, of such magnitude that our highest enjoyments do not satisfy us, but we groan earnestly after the full possession of it. To review these three great points is all that I shall attempt.

I. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US, THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH IT. In speaking of these opposites, the Apostle as by a kind of spiritual arithmetic, seems to place them in opposite columns. The amount of the column of sufferings, if viewed by itself, would appear great. Much evil attends us, both as men, and as good men. The misery of man is great upon him; and great are the afflictions which have been endured by the faithful for Christ's sake. For his sake they have been *killed all the day long*, and *accounted as sheep for the slaugh-*

ter. He who entered on this reckoning could not have made light of the sufferings of this present time, for want of an experimental acquaintance with them. In answer to those who depreciated his ministry, he could say, *Are they ministers of Christ?* (*I speak as a fool,*) *I more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* Yet the same person assures us, that he reckons the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. They may be heavy and tedious, when viewed by themselves; but, weighed against a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, they are light and momentary.

It is thus that, in the subject before us, he considers our sufferings as confined to *this present time.* The short duration of suffering ordinarily renders it tolerable, even though, for a time, it may be acute; and, if succeeded by lasting enjoyment, we consider it unmanly to make much of it; and if it be in the service of a beloved sovereign, and in support of a cause of great importance, and which lies near the heart, it is usually treated as a matter of still less account. Thus it was that the Apostle reckoned his sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

To say of two things, that one of them is not to be compared with the other, is a strong mode of expression. It is in this way that the great God expresses his infinite superiority to the most exalted creatures: *Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto Jehovah?* So, when two things of an opposite nature come in suc-

cession, and the latter so entirely prevails over the former as to obliterate it, or in a manner to efface the remembrance of it, it may be said of the one, that it is not to be compared with the other. Thus the joy that followed the resurrection of Christ was to the sorrow that preceded it: *Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* Such also will be the joy of the heavenly inheritance, that it will efface from our remembrance the few years of sorrow which have preceded it; so efface them, however, that we shall never think of them with regret, but as a foil to heighten our bliss.

II. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US AT THE RESURRECTION, THAT ITS INFLUENCE EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE CREATION. This I take to be generally expressed in the 19th verse: *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* That which follows in verses 20—22, explains and accounts for it, by showing how the creatures were brought into a state of bondage by the sin of man, and how they shall be liberated from it when he is liberated: *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

The *creature*—the *whole creation*—or *every creature*, are the same thing, and denote, I apprehend, not man, but every creature around him which has been brought under the influence of his revolt. As when Achan sinned, all that pertained to him suffered; so, when our first parents sinned, the whole creation, in so far as it was connected with man, partook of the effects. This

appears to be meant by the creature's being *made subject to vanity*, and coming under *the bondage of corruption*.

The creation was brought into this state of bondage, *not willingly*, as was the case with man, but by the sovereign will of the Creator. He could have stopped the machinery of the material world, and at once have put an end to the rebellion; but he thought fit to order the laws of nature to keep their course; and, as to the abuse that man would make of them, he should be called to account for that another day.

The bondage of the creatures, however, was not to be perpetual: he who subjected them to it, subjected them *in hope, because the creature itself also*, as well as the sons of God, shall be delivered from its thraldom, and, as it were, participate with them in their glorious liberty. The redemption of our bodies will be the signal of its emancipation from under the effects of sin, and the birth-day, as it were, of a new creation. As by man's apostasy every thing connected with him became, in some way, subservient to evil; so, by the deliverance of the sons of God at the resurrection, they shall be delivered from this servitude, and the whole creation, according to the natural order of things, shall serve and praise the Lord.

But we must inquire more particularly into this *bondage* of the creatures, and into their *deliverance* from it.

It is true, that the ground was literally cursed for man's sake, so as spontaneously to bring forth briars and thorns, rather than fruits; the animals also have literally been subjected to great misery and cruelty; but it is not of a literal bondage, I conceive, that the Apostle speaks; nor of a literal deliverance, as some have imagined, by the resurrection of animals; nor of a literal groaning after it. The whole appears to be what rhetoricians call a prosopopœia, or a figure of speech in which sentiments and language are given to things as though they were persons. Thus, on the invasion of Sennacherib, the earth is said to mourn, and Lebanon to be ashamed; and thus, at the coming of the Messiah, the heavens are called upon to rejoice, and the earth to be glad, the sea to roar, the floods to clap their hands, and the trees of the wood to rejoice.

When God created the heavens and the earth, every thing was made, according to its nature and capacity, to show forth his glory. Thus *the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language where their voice is not heard.* Thus also heaven and earth are called upon to praise their Maker: *Praise ye him sun and moon: praise him all ye stars of light. Praise him ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.—Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail: snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: mountains and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl.* Such was the natural order of things established by the Creator: every thing, consciously or unconsciously, furnished its tribute of praise to Him who is over all blessed forever!

But, by the entrance of sin into the world, the creatures became subservient to it; as, when a rebellion breaks out in an empire, the resources of the country, being seized by the rebels, are turned to the support of their cause, and against their rightful owner, so every thing which God had created for the accommodation of man, or in any way rendered subservient to his comfort, was turned aside from its original design, and perverted to the purposes of corruption. The Lord complains of the corn, and wine, and oil, and flax, and wool, which he had given to Israel, being prostituted to Baal; and threatens to recover them. Who can count the sacrifices and offerings which have been made of God's creatures to Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Bacchus, and other abominations of the West; or to Brama, Veeshnoo, Seeb, Dhoorga, Juggernaut, and other abominations of the East? And though gross idolatry has in many nations, been dispelled by the light of the gospel, yet still the bounties of providence, furnished for the accommodation of man, are made to serve his lusts. The sun cannot emit his illuminating and fructifying beams but to furnish food for the corrupt propensities of man. The clouds cannot pour down their showers, but the effects of them are made subservient to sin. Rich soils and fruitful seasons become the hot-beds of

vice, on which, as in Sodom, men become ripe for destruction at an earlier period than ordinary.

The creatures have not only been subjected to the vanity of serving the idols and lusts of men; but have themselves been turned into gods, and worshipped to the exclusion of the Creator, who is blessed forever! There is scarcely a creature in heaven or on earth, but what has been thus drawn into the service of *corruption*. Not only the sun, and moon, and stars; but gold and silver, and brass, and wood, and stone, and birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things! And though the light of the gospel has driven this species of stupidity out of Europe, (which the science of Greece and Rome did not so much as diminish,) yet it is in no want of advocates among her degenerate sons. And they that would be ashamed to plead the cause of gross idolatry, yet, in a manner, idolize the works of God, by opposing them to his word. The sweet singer of Israel, after celebrating the former, held up the latter as greatly exceeding them. With him, the light of nature and that of revelation were in harmony; but unbelievers place them at variance. Nature, with them occupies the place of God, and the light imparted by it is admired at the expense of his word. They have no objection to acknowledge a Supreme Being as the author of the machinery of nature, provided he would give up his moral government over them; but the scriptures are full of hard sayings which they cannot hear! The works of God are silent preachers: in their mouth, there is no reproof but what a hard heart can misconstrue into the approbation of the Creator, understanding his bounties as rewards conferred on his virtuous creatures: this, therefore is the only preaching which many will hear.

In these, and a thousand other ways, the creatures of God have been subjected to vanity. Had they been possessed of intelligence, they would, from the first, have risen up against us, rather than have submitted to such bondage. Yes: rather than have been thus forced into the service of sin by the rebel man, they would have conspired together to destroy him from the face of the earth. The sun would have scorched him; the moon with her sickly rays would have smitten him; the stars in their cours-

es would have fought against him; air, earth, fire, water, birds, beasts, and even the stones, would have conspired to rid creation of the being, who, by rebelling against the Creator, had filled it with disorder and misery. And though the creatures are not possessed of intelligence, yet from a kind of instinctive tendency to vindicate the cause of God and righteousness, they are naturally at war with rebellious man. Were it not so, there would be no need of a covenant to be made on our behalf with the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, the creeping things of the ground, and even with the stones.

God, in his infinite wisdom, saw fit to subject the creatures to this vanity for a season, contrary as it was to their nature; but it is only for a season, and therefore is said to be *in hope;* in the end, they that have abused them will, except they repent, be punished, and they themselves be liberated from their hateful yoke. Thus, for a season, he subjected the seed of Abraham, his own servants, to serve the Egyptians; but *that* NATION, *says he, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*

The time fixed for the deliverance of the creatures from the bondage of corruption, is that of *the manifestation of the sons of God.* Hence, they are in a manner identified with them: *The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;* looking for it as for their own deliverance. The redemption of our bodies from the grave will be the destruction of the last enemy, or, in respect of believers, the termination of the effects of sin: and, as the thraldom of the creatures commenced with the commencement of sin, it is fit that it should terminate with its termination. Thus our resurrection will be the signal of emancipation to the creatures, and their emancipation will magnify the glory that shall be revealed in us. Heaven, earth, and seas, and all that in them is, will no longer be worshipped in the place of God, nor compelled to minister to his enemies; but, in that renovated state *wherein dwelleth righteousness,* shall exist but to praise and glorify their Creator.

The terms used to express the tendency of the creatures towards this great crisis are very strong. Nature is personified, and represented as upon the utmost stretch of expectation; as groaning and travailing in pain to be delivered. Assuredly, that must be a most important object, the accomplishment of which thus interests the whole creation. This object is *the glory that shall be revealed in us—the manifestation of the sons of God—the glorious liberty of the children of God;* and thus it is that the Apostle establishes his position—That such is the magnitude of the inheritance of believers, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with it.

But we must not dismiss this part of the subject, without noticing more particularly these descriptions of the heavenly inheritance—*the glory to be revealed in us—the manifestation of the sons of God*—and *the glorious liberty of the children of God.* They all refer to the perfecting of salvation through the death of Christ, which is the greatest display of the glory of God that ever has or will be made. This is the last of that series of events which have been carrying on from the beginning of the world, and to the accomplishment of which they have all been subordinate.

The glory that shall be revealed in us.—There will, doubtless, be a flood of light and joy that will then open to our admiring minds; but the words seem rather to denote *the manifestation of the divine glory in our salvation* than barely its being *revealed to us.* Thus the Lord Jesus will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. The great Physician will appear, with his recovered millions, and, in the presence of an assembled universe, will present them to the Father. Thus the glory of God will be revealed to the universe IN our salvation. All his glorious perfections will be manifested in such a light as they never were by any other of his works, nor by this till it was completed. And that which is revealed to the universe IN us will not be less, but more of an enjoyment to us, than if it had been revealed TO us only. The joy of the returned captives was not diminished, but increased, by the surrounding nations saying, *The Lord hath done great things for them!*

The manifestation of the sons of God.—The foregoing description of the heavenly inheritance had respect to God's manifesting *his* glory; this to his manifesting *ours*. We have been familiar with the terms, *sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty;* but who has been able to comprehend the magnitude of the blessing! Even an inspired Apostle was overwhelmed in thinking of it, and confessed his ignorance: *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is!* Then the importance of being *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, will be apparent.

The sons of God have here been but little known. Not being distinguished by any thing pertaining to circumstances, or outward condition, and that which has distinguished them being of a still and unostentatious nature, they have generally passed through the world without attracting much of its notice, unless it were to despise and persecute them. If they have been acknowledged as pious men, and have escaped the persecutions and reproaches of the wicked, yet, being mostly poor, and undistinguished by brilliancy of talent, they have ordinarily been considered as beneath attention. But, at that day, the Judge of heaven and earth will distinguish them as the sheep that he will place at his right hand, and as the blessed of his Father, whom he will welcome to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; while those who have despised and persecuted them, shall be sentenced to everlasting punishment.

The glorious liberty of the children of God.—The children of God have possessed a glorious liberty from their first believing in Christ. The son then made them free, and they were free indeed! And when the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved, and they are received among *the spirits of just men made perfect*, this is a liberty more glorious. But, while their bodies are imprisoned in the grave, the deliverance is not complete. They are, as yet, under thraldom. The promise of Christ to raise us up at the last day is yet unfulfilled. They have been delivered

from the dominion of sin, and from the existence of it in their minds; but not from its effects. It is reserved for the second coming of Christ, when he will come *without sin* UNTO SALVATION, to accomplish this. This is the destruction of the *last* enemy; this, therefore, puts an end to the war. In the account of Christ's second coming, there appears to be an allusion to the blowing of the trumpet of jubilee, and the liberation of the captives: *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the* TRUMP *of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* The resurrection, then, will be to believers a *jubilee*, a day of deliverance. The account of it, by the same Apostle in the 15th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, gives us the triumphant song which believers shall sing, standing over the graves in which they have been so long imprisoned: *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!* This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, in which the whole creation shall participate.

III. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US AT THE RESURRECTION, THAT THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE POSSESSED THE HIGHEST ENJOYMENTS IN THIS WORLD WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THEM; BUT GROANED WITHIN THEMSELVES, WAITING FOR THE POSSESSION OF IT. *And not only they*, (the creatures,) *but ourselves also,—even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

By *we ourselves*, I understand the Apostle to mean, not believers in general, but those believers in his own times, who, with himself, possessed so large a measure of grace and peace as habitually to rejoice in the Lord. If we read the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall perceive a mighty tide of joy in the minds of these Christians: *And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and hav-*

ing favour with all the people. They did not merely rejoice *notwithstanding* the persecutions which they met with, but *in* them: *They departed from the presence of the council,* (where they had been *beaten,*) *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* These good men seem to have found heaven upon earth. They had *the first-fruits of the Spirit,* or those rich communications of the Holy Spirit, which, as the first-fruits under the law were the best of the kind, showed what might be expected under the gospel-dispensation. The Holy Spirit was imparted to them, not only in a greater degree than usual, but under the peculiar character of the *Spirit of adoption,* by which they were admitted to near communion with God, as children with a father. Nor was this confined to the days of Pentecost, and the times immediately succeeding: forty years after this, Peter could say, of the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:* and this too, at a time when the *fiery trial* of persecution was coming or come upon them.

But, notwithstanding the spiritual enjoyment possessed by these Christians, they looked forward with earnest desire for the coming of the day of God; not only as those who hasted towards it, but by their hopes and prayers would seem to hasten its approach. Such are the accounts given of them in the New Testament: *Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to* WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN, *whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.—He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

The enjoyments of the first Christians, instead of abating their desire for the coming of their Lord, appear to have heightened it. The more they possessed of the first-fruits, the more they desired the lump. The fruits of Canaan, brought into the wilderness, were not designed to satisfy Israel, but rather to excite them to go up and possess the land.

It is this ardent desire that is expressed by the terms *groaning within ourselves.* The groaning of the creation was in a figure, but

this is real. These are those *groanings which cannot be uttered,* (verse 26,) and which the Spirit of God excited in the way of hope and patience and prayer.

The terms by which the resurrection of believers is expressed, namely, *the adoption,* and *the redemption of our body,* serve to heighten our ideas of the glorious event. It is observable, that the Apostle, throughout this description, makes use of what may be called old terms in a new sense. *The glorious liberty of the children of God* was, as we have seen, enjoyed by them, in one sense, from the day that they believed in Jesus; but, in describing this event, a new sense is put upon the same words. The idea of adoption also had long been familiarized to Christians by the apostolic writings; but, as used here, it has a new meaning attached to it. From the day they received the Saviour, they received power to become the sons of God; the Lord Almighty, as by a judicial act and deed, put them among his children: but still, the body being doomed to die because of sin, till this dishonour is wiped away there is something wanting to complete the execution of the deed. Our vile body must be changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, ere we can be actually and fully introduced into the heavenly family. We must put on immortality, before we shall be fit company for immortals. We must be made equal to the angels, ere we can associate with angels. Finally: To be completely *the children of God,* we must be *the children of the resurrection.*

The disparity between Old and New-testament believers was such, that the former were represented as children in a state of minority, kept under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the Father; while the latter are supposed to be come to the possession of their inheritance: (Gal. iv. 1--6.) how much greater, then, must be the disparity between believers in a mortal, and in an immortal state: both are adopted into the family of God; but the one in a much higher sense than the other.

Similar observations might be made on the term *redemption,* as here applied to the resurrection of the body. This term was familiarized to Christians, by the apostolic writings. They had *redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;* but

here the word is used in a new sense, denoting the last act of deliverance, even that of the body, from under the thaldom of death and the imprisonment of the grave. It is in reference to this last act of deliverance that Christ is said to be *made unto us—redemption*. The redemption of our souls by his blood preceded his being made unto us wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification; but the redemption of our body, as being the last act of deliverance, succeeds them. The body is a part of Christ's purchase, as really as the soul. It is on this principle that the Corinthians were dissuaded from polluting it by fornication: *Ye are not your own*, but *bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* The resurrection of the body, therefore, is the recovery of the last part of the Redeemer's purchase, signified by that expressive sentence, so often repeated, *I will raise it up at the last day.*

This is the glory that shall be revealed in us, with which the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared; this is the great crisis of creation, to which all that precedes it tends, as to its last end; and the result to which believers, who have possessed the richest communications of grace in this life, look with earnest expectation

To conclude: We see here, *what a glorious hope the gospel sets before us.* In point of magnitude, crowns and kingdoms are but baubles, when compared with it: yet it is not for crowns and kingdoms that the bulk of mankind set at naught the heavenly prize, but for things of still less account. Thirty pieces of silver were, in one case, reckoned of more account than Christ; and in another, a mess of pottage! *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Farther: We here see, *what encouragement there is to pray and labour for the promotion of Christ's spiritual kingdom in the world.* The glory to be revealed at the resurrection is not to be considered as a solitary event; but rather as the consummation of

a series of events which shall have preceded it. Christ, we are told, *must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* The reign of Christ, therefore, is now making progress towards this great crisis; and, as it proceeds, it produces, in a degree, the same effects as it will when perfected. As, in proportion, to the prevalence of the cause of corruption, the creatures of God are subjected to the vanity of supporting it; so, in proportion as the gospel prevails, and men are freed from the dominion of sin by believing in Christ, the creatures also are emancipated with them: from that time they are used to the glory of God, and not abused to support the cause of his enemies. Thus, in promoting the cause of Christ, we contribute to the deliverance of the creation.

Finally: We must not forget, that *the possession of all this glory stands connected with justification, by faith in Jesus Christ.* The whole is an inference arising from the doctrine. Whom he thus *justified, them he also glorified.* It is a very serious question, on what ground we rest our acceptance with God. It was at this doctrine that the Jewish nation stumbled and fell. Let their fall be our warning. *The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.*

SERMON XXVII.

[Delivered at the funeral of the Rev. J. Sutcliff, of Olney, June 28, 1814.]

JUDE 20, 21.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

I FEEL a difficulty in speaking on this occasion. A long and intimate friendship, cemented by a similarity of views and a co-operation in ministerial and missionary labours, produces a feeling somewhat resembling that of a near relation, who, on such an occasion, instead of speaking, must wish to be indulged in silent grief. But the request of my deceased brother cannot be refused.

In selecting a passage for so solemn an occasion, it was natural for our dear friend to fix on one that should express his *last sentiments* and his *future prospects*. He wished no doubt, to leave a testimony of his firm persuasion of the truth of those principles which he had believed and taught, and to the hope which they inspired in the prospect of eternity.

The occasion on which the passage is introduced is deserving of our notice. Certain men, of pernicious principles, had crept unawares into the churches, so as to render it necessary for the Apostle to write even on *the common salvation*, and to exhort the brethren earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Nor was it confined to principles: those who had departed from the faith had also gone far into impure and dissolute conduct; turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, defiling the flesh, despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities. It is no new thing for deviations in Christian doctrine to be followed by those in practice. As truth sanctifies the mind, so error pollutes it. It was to turn the apostasy of these ungodly men to the advantage of the faithful, that the Apostle addresses them as he does: *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* Having exposed the wicked ways into which these men had turned aside, he points out the good and the right way, and holds up the end to which it leads.

In discoursing on the subject, we shall notice the principles which we have suggested to us, and the prospects which they furnish in respect of a blessed hereafter.

I. Let us offer a few remarks on THE PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE HERE SUGGESTED TO US, AS CONSTITUTING TRUE RELIGION. Whatever ideas we have entertained of truth and religion, it is necessary to bring them to the scriptures, as to the standard.

1. True evangelical religion is here represented as a building, *the foundation of which is laid in the faith of Christ*: *Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.* Whether it relate to personal or to social religion, this must be the foundation of the fabric, or the whole will fall. Many persons are awakened to some serious concern about futurity, and excited to inquire what they must do to be saved: and, in that state of mind, it is not unusual for them to have recourse to reading and prayer, as a preparation for death. Many preachers too, will think it sufficient to direct them to the use of these means. But if the death and mediation of Christ be overlooked, it is not reading, or prayer, or any other

religious exercise, that will avail us. Why did John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, lay the foundation of the gospel kingdom by calling on sinners to *repent and believe the gospel?* Was it not because all other duties, prior to these, were of no account? When some, who followed Christ for loaves, inquired what they must do to work the works of God; his answer was, *This is the work of God, That ye believe on him whom he hath sent;* plainly intimating, that no work, prior to this, could be pleasing to God. The scriptures direct men to pray, but it is in faith. To the question, *What must I do to be saved?* there is but one answer: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Christ is the door; by him if any man enter in he shall be saved. To direct inquirers to any thing short of this, is to direct them to that which, if complied with, will leave them short of salvation. This the scriptures never do: there is not a direction in the oracles of God but, if truly followed, will lead to everlasting life.

One lays the foundation of his religion in what he calls *reason;* but which, in fact, is his own reasoning. The same inspired writer who in one sentence commends understanding, in the next warns us against leaning to our own understanding. To strengthen ourselves, and one another, in this way, is to build up ourselves on our own conceits. Another founds his religion on his *good deeds.* Good deeds undoubtedly form a part of the building, but the foundation is not the place for them. They are not the cause, but the effects of faith. They prepare us for heaven, as meetening us for it, but not as rendering us deserving of it. A third builds his religion on *impressions.* It is not from the death of Christ for sinners, or any other gospel truth, that he derives his comfort; but from an impulse on his mind that his sins are forgiven, and that he is a favourite of God, which is, certainly, no where revealed in the scriptures. We may build ourselves up in this way, but the building will fall. A fourth founds his religion on *faith,* but it is not a holy faith, either in respect of its nature or its effects. It is dead, being alone, or without fruit. The faith on which the first Christians build up themselves, included repentance for sin. As when forgiveness is promised to repentance, faith in Christ is supposed; so when justification is promised to believing, repen-

tance is supposed. However distinct they are as to their nature and objects, they have no separate existence. Hence, in the preaching of John, Christ, and the apostles, they are united; and hence, the faith of Christ, supposing a renunciation of every thing opposed to it, and including a cordial acquiescence in the gospel-way of salvation through his death, is *most holy*.

These principles your dear deceased pastor has long believed and taught. May you long continue to exemplify their holy influence.

2. That religion which has its foundation in the faith of Christ, will increase by *praying in the Holy Spirit*. As there is no true practical religion without faith in Christ, so there is no true prayer but *in the Holy Spirit*. It is true, *that men* OUGHT *always to pray, and not to faint;* but it is no less true, that we know not what to pray for *as we ought*, but as the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: clear proof this, by the way, that may be man's duty which yet, owing to his depravity, cannot be performed but by divine grace; and that the Holy Spirit works that in us, which God, as the governor of the world, requires of us; writing his law upon our hearts, or working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

The assistance of the Holy Spirit, however, is not that of which we are always sensible. We must not live in the neglect of prayer, at any time, because we are unconscious of being under divine influence; but rather, as our Lord directs, pray *for* his Holy Spirit. It is *in* prayer that the Spirit of God ordinarily assists us. Prayers begun in dejection have often ended in joy and praise: of this, many of the Psalms of David furnish us with examples.

One of the sentences uttered by your deceased pastor, when drawing near his end, was, I WISH I HAD PRAYED MORE. This was one of those weighty sayings which are not unfrequently uttered in view of the solemn realities of eternity. This wish has often recurred to me since his departure, as equally applicable to myself, and, with it, the resolution of that holy man, President Edwards, 'so to live as he would wish he had when he came to die.' In reviewing my own life, *I wish I had prayed more than I have for the success of the gospel*. I have seen enough to fur-

nish me with matter of thankfulness; but had I prayed more, I might have seen more. I wish I had prayed more than I have, *for the salvation of those about me*, and who are given me in charge. When the father of the lunatic doubted whether Jesus could do any thing for him, he was told in answer, that if he could believe, all things were possible. On hearing this, he burst into tears, saying, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!* He seems to have understood our Lord as suggesting, that if the child was not healed, it would not be owing to any want of power in him, but to his own unbelief. This might well cause him to weep and exclaim as he did. The thought of his unbelief causing the death of his child was distressing. The same thought has occurred to me as applicable to the neglect of the prayer of faith. Have I not, by this guilty negligence, been accessary to the destruction of some that are dear to me? And were I equally concerned for the souls of my connexions, as he was for the life of his child, should I not weep with him? I wish I had prayed more than I have, *for my own soul:* I might then have enjoyed much more communion with God. The gospel affords the same ground for spiritual enjoyment, as it did to the first Christians. I wish I had prayed more than I have, *in all my undertakings:* I might then have had my steps more directed by God, and attended with fewer deviations from his will. There is no intercourse with God without prayer. It is thus that we walk with God, and have our conversation in heaven.

3. We are given to understand, that by means of building on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, we *keep ourselves in the love of God.* The love of God, here, is to be understood, not of his love to us, but of ours to him; as when our Lord told the unbelieving Jews that they had not *the love of God* in them. To keep alive this sacred flame, amidst the temptations of the world, is, in a manner, the sum of the Christian life. If this be preserved, every other grace will thrive, and we shall prosper in all that we set our hands to, in the service of God. Not only must natural affection to our dearest friends and relations give place to the love of God, but even the love of our Christian brethren must be *on account of their obedience to him: Who is*

my mother? and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

This is a subject into which your dear pastor entered with deep interest, considering it as essential to true religion. He dwelt much, in his preaching, on the glory of the divine character and government, as displayed in the law and the gospel, and scrupled not to declare his firm persuasion that all religious affections which disregarded this were spurious, and would prove of no account at the great day. He was persuaded, that, as sin must be hated *as* sin, or it is not hated at all; so God must be loved *as* God, or he is not loved at all. But to love God as God, is to love him for what he *is*, as well as for what he has *done for us*. He had, indeed, no such notion of loving God for his own excellency, as should render us indifferent to our own salvation. On the contrary, he considered it as essential to the love of God to desire his favour as our chief good. But we can no more desire this, irrespective of what he is, than we can desire any other object without considering it as *in itself* desirable. Unless we love God in respect of his character, his favour would be no enjoyment to us.

In these views, I am persuaded our brother was in the right, and that, instead of their being mere metaphysical subtilties, they enter into the essence of true religion. The glory of the gospel consists in an exhibition of the glory of the Divine character. Had it been possible for sin to have been forgiven, and sinners accepted, in a way inconsistent with righteousness, however agreeable it might have been, as furnishing us with the means of escape from wrath, there had been no glory in it, and, had we truly loved God, no satisfaction to our minds.

In judging of what is true or false, right or wrong, the love of God is that to the mind which an ear for music is to harmony, or which a delicate sense of fitness is to our speaking and acting with propriety. It is thus that the Apostle represents it in his Epistle to the Philippians; *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment: that ye may approve things that are excellent:* or,— *in all sense; that ye may try things that differ.* In short, there is no calculating the bear-

ings of this principle ; it is the life blood that flows through all the veins of true religion. Hence the prayer of the Apostle: *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.*

It is by building up ourselves on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, that we are supposed to keep alive this heavenly flame. These are the means adapted to that important end: they are to the love of God that which oil is to the fire, tending to feed and to enliven it. It is by a growing acquaintance with the word of God, accompanied with habitual prayer, that the love of God increases and abounds, more and more. There are things which are inconsistent with the love of God, such as the love of the world, and the indulgence of its lusts: *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* But a life of faith and prayer will subdue these weeds, no less than they, when indulged, are known to choke the word of God, and to render it unfruitful. Let the field be but well occupied with good seed, and there will be no room for the weeds: *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*

4. We are taught, that, when we have done all, *in looking for eternal life, we must keep our eye singly and solely on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It was this part of the subject that our dear brother particularly repeated, as expressive, I doubt not, of both the ground and object of his hope. Every one who knew him can bear testimony that he was a just and holy man, and that it was his great concern, in every station he filled, to maintain good works ; but his dependence for acceptance with God was not on them. He looked for eternal life through *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The best characters have always been the most sensible of their own unworthiness, and the farthest from self-righteous boasting. After all their labours in the cause of God, they feel to have been unprofitable servants, as having done only what was their duty to do, and that with so much imperfection, as to furnish matter of humiliation and self-abasement. It is true, that a servant of God may enjoy a portion of solid satisfaction in reviewing those things, which, by the grace of God, he has been enabled to accomplish ; and this, without any mixture of self-righteous boasting. This was the case with the Apostle of the Gentiles. He could say, on the approach

of death, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* But if Paul himself had been speaking of the consideration on which he hoped to be accepted and saved, he would, like Jude, have resolved it into *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

You know, brethren, that this is the doctrine which your pastor has preached among you for nearly forty years. It is true, he did not so represent the grace of God as to cherish a spirit of slothfulness or wantonness; but, in all his labours, it was his uniform design to direct his hearers, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, to the only way of salvation marked out in the Holy Scriptures: *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* He preached the doctrine of sovereign grace in such a manner as to *warn* every man against trusting to his own righteousness, and to *teach* every man in what way he must be saved, if he be saved at all, as well as to lead those who had believed in Jesus to ascribe it to the grace of God that they were what they were. And now, having, as I said, for nearly forty years pointed you to the good and the right way, he has himself walked in it; leaving you and all the world with this sentiment upon his lips—*Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Let us now proceed to the latter part of the subject; namely,

II. THE PROSPECTS WHICH THESE PRINCIPLES FURNISH AS TO A BLESSED HEREAFTER: *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

By the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, I understand, that which is communicated through his death, and with the dispensation of which he is invested, both now and at the day of judgment: *Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.—The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.*

We have already received much of the mercy of Christ. It was mercy that induced him to assume our nature, and undertake our salvation; to give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us;

to send his Holy Spirit to renew us, when we were dead in sin; to intercede for us at the right hand of God; and to be with us in all our labours and sufferings for his name's sake: but, in respect of actual enjoyment, there is much more yet to be expected. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ is communicated in greater and greater degrees, till, like rivers terminating in the ocean, it issues in eternal life.

The first exercise of mercy which the scriptures direct us to look for, on our leaving the body, is, *An immediate reception into the presence of Christ, and the society of the spirits of just men made perfect. The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.—Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.—I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.—And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.* What this overwhelming tide of mercy will prove we have yet to learn. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Judah they were like those that dream: the deliverance seemed too great to be real. And thus it may be with believers on their departing from the body, and entering into the joy of their Lord. But of this our dear brother knows more, since his taking leave of us, than we should be able to discover in a series of years on earth, even though we should make it our constant study. If an inspired Apostle could say, *We know not what we shall be*, it is vain for us to think of forming an adequate conception of it.

I do not know whether I ought not to reckon under this particular, *The glorious progress of Christ's kingdom in this world.* Why should we suspect whether our brethren who rest from their labours be from hence interested in this object? If there be joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, why not among the glorified saints? And if over one sinner, much more over the multitudes that shall be gathered in the latter days from

every kindred and tongue and people and nation.* There is a sense in which the dead know not any thing: *their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.* All this is true, as to the things of this world; but it does not follow, that those who die in the Lord have no more a portion in his spiritual kingdom. As well might we infer that their love of him and hatred of evil shall perish. But I ask leave, on this subject, to refer to *A Meditation on the nature and progressiveness of the heavenly glory*, contained in a small volume of *Dialogues, Letters, and Essays*, published in 1806.

Another stream of mercy for which we are directed to look, will attend the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consist in *the dead being raised, and the living changed. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven,—with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* It has been usual for nations to reserve the most notable acts of grace to the appearance or coronation of their kings, as tending to honour their entrance on the government. And thus both the first and second appearing of Christ are periods which God has distinguished by the most glorious displays of mercy. The first was a jubilee to the Gentile world; and the last will be the same to the whole creation. As, on the sounding of the jubilee trumpet, the captives were liberated; so, when the trump of God shall sound, the righteous dead shall be raised, and their resurrection will be to the creatures of God the signal of emancipation from under the effects of sin.

View the grave as a long, dark, and comfortless abode, and it is sufficient to appal the stoutest spirit: but take into consideration that here the Lord lay; that he was raised from the dead, that he might be the first fruits of them that slept; and that of all that the

* Such, we know, were the ideas of our dear departed brother; which, as some may remember, he enlarged upon at the Thursday-morning meeting of the Association, held at Kettering, in 1813.

Father gave him he will lose nothing, but will raise it up at the last day ;—and it will wear a different aspect. Job, when contemplating the grave as a long and dreary habitation, describes it in the most plaintive language : *Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more !* But, when his views are fixed on the deliverance which he should obtain at that great and glorious day, his complaints are exchanged for triumphs. It is delightful to observe the erection of soul which a believing prospect of the resurrection gave him, after all his depressions : *Oh that my words were now written ! oh that they were printed in a book ! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever ! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me.* In a strain very similar to this, the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, describes the victory over death and the grave, representing believers as actually raised from the dead, and as standing upon their graves, looking the conquered enemy in the face, and exclaiming, *O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* By looking for this part of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be reconciled to death, even before we meet it.

But there is another stream of mercy beyond this, to which we are directed to look, and which pertains to *the last judgment.* We have an impressive idea given us of this in Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus : *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus ; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain : but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me The Lord grant unto him that he may find* MERCY OF THE LORD, IN THAT DAY.

We have needed mercy on many days, and have found it ; but that is a day in which we shall need it more than ever. It is a fond notion, entertained by some, that the sins of believers will not be brought into judgment. We are assured, however, that we must

all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God ; and that of every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment. The mercy of the Lord, in that day, will not consist in connivance ; but, as in all other instances, be exercised consistently with righteousness. In our present state of mind, we may wish to have it otherwise. David might wish that the evil he had wrought in secret should be kept secret ; but the Lord determined to expose it before the sun. It does not comport with the character of God to conceal the truth, but to make it manifest. If the sins of believers were not brought into judgment, there would be no occasion for the exercise of forgiving mercy. It is from the strictness of the trial, and the awfulness of the sentence to which, if dealt with according to their deserts, they would be exposed in that day, that mercy will be needed. The world shall know their guilt, and their repentance, and the way in which they are forgiven ; so as to glorify God, though it be unwillingly, and to feel the justice of their own condemnation. In this view of the last judgment, the manifestation of guilt and wrath and mercy will each surpass all our present conceptions.

It is commonly represented, in the scriptures, that every man will be judged *according to his works :* and true it is, that all our actions and words, and even thoughts, will undergo an impartial scrutiny, and be considered as the test of character. They, for example, who have ministered to Christ's members in their necessities, will be treated as having ministered unto him ; and they that have disregarded them, as having disregarded him : but, if, by being judged according to our works, were meant that God will proceed with us on the principles of mere justice, giving to every one his due, we should all be condemned : *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand ? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

Nor will the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that day, be confined to the forgiveness, of sin : even the *rewards* of that day, though expressive of righteousness and faithfulness, yet have their origin in mercy. The crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give in that day to all who love his ap-

pearing, will not be a reward of debt, but of grace. But for grace, we should have had no good deeds to be rewarded; or, if we had, they could no more be named in that day than the good behaviour of a murderer will bear to be alleged as a balance against his crimes. But, being accepted in Christ, what is done for him is rewarded for his sake. Hence, the crown of glory that shall be bestowed on his appearing is denominated, *The* GRACE *that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

After this, nothing remains but that *eternal life*, into which, as into an ocean, all these streams of mercy flow: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Such was the object of your dear pastor's hope. May such be yours and mine: let our last end be like his!

The separation of a pastor and a people is a serious event. He is gone to give account of his ministry, and his account will include many things pertaining to the people of his charge. Some of them, I trust, will be found to have received the love of the truth, and will be his joy and crown of rejoicing. Could he have uttered his heart to you, his children, it would have been to press upon you a perseverance in the things that you have received and learned. Nay, he did so far utter his heart as to say to those about him, "If any thing be said as from me, let the last word be, *As I have loved you, see that ye love one another.*" I doubt not but it has been his endeavour, that, after his decease, you might have these things always in your remembrance; and that he was less anxious that you should remember him than them: but I trust you will remember both. Others, I fear, will be found to have sat under his ministry in vain. The word preached has not profited them, not being mixed with faith. It is an affecting case to perish from under a faithful minister: for if he be pure from your blood, on whose head must it be found, but on your own? Let us hope, that if the warning voice of your minister has not been heard before, it may be heard now. His last end furnishes a lesson of instruction, by which he being dead yet speaketh. You see here, that if a man keep Christ's saying, he will never see death. Death to him is not death, but the introduction to everlast-

ing life. But know also, that he that believeth not the Son will never see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

I shall conclude with a brief account of our deceased brother; which I give partly from my own knowledge, and partly from the communications of others.

I am aware that some great and good men have imposed silence on these occasions. Without impeaching their motives, I take the liberty to differ from them. It is true, that for sinful creatures, as we all are, to heap encomiums on one another, is vain and sinful: yet we may err, on the other hand, by concealing what the grace of God has done for us. In this view, one may, on occasion, speak of himself, as did the Apostle Paul; and, if so, why not of another. David did not withhold a tribute of affection to the memory of his brother Jonathan. Nor did Luke conceal the fruits of faith and love which had appeared in Dorcas. She might have left an injunction that at her decease nothing should be said of her: but the widows *must* weep, and show the garments which she had made for the poor in her life time. It is not for us to suppress the feelings of nature, and still less those of grace.

Our deceased brother was born near Halifax, in Yorkshire, on the 9th of August, 1752, O. S. His parents were both of them pious characters, and remarkable for their strict attention to the instruction and government of their children. Of course he would be taught the good and the right way from his childhood. It does not appear, however, that he was made wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, till about the sixteenth or seventeenth year of his age. This was under the ministry of his revered friend and father *Mr. John Fawcett*, pastor of the church-meeting at Hepden Bridge. Of this church he became a member, on May 28, 1769. Being of a serious and studious turn of mind, he appeared to his friends to possess gifts suited to the ministry, which was proposed to his consideration. The proposal met with his own wishes, and being desirous of obtaining all the instruction he could, he went, in January 1772, to the Bristol Academy, then under the care of Messrs. Hugh and Caleb Evans. Of his conduct in this situation, it is sufficient to say, that it procured him the esteem of his tutors to the end of their lives.

In 1774, he left the Academy, and, after stopping a short time at different places, in July 1775 he came to Olney. It was in the spring of the following year, when the Association was held at Olney, that my acquaintance with him commenced; and, from that day to this, all that I have known of him has tended to endear him to me.

I cannot say when it was that he first became acquainted with the writings of *President Edwards*, and other New England divines; but, having read them, he drank deeply into them: particularly, into the harmony between the law and the gospel; between the obligations of men to love God with all their hearts, and their actual enmity against him; and between the duty of ministers to call on sinners to repent and believe in Christ for salvation, and the necessity of omnipotent grace to render the call effectual. The consequence was, that, while he increased in his attachment to the Calvinistic doctrines of human depravity, and of salvation by sovereign and efficacious grace, he rejected, as unscriptural, the *high*, or rather *hyper* Calvinistic notions of the gospel, which went to set aside the obligations of sinners to every thing spiritually good, and the invitations of the gospel as being addressed to them.* Hence it was, that his preaching was disapproved by a part of his hearers, and that, in the early part of his ministry at Olney, he had to encounter a considerable portion of individual opposition. "By patience, calmness, and prudent perseverance, however," says one of his friends, "he lived to subdue prejudice; and, though his beginning was very unpropitious, from a small and not united interest, he raised it to a large body of people, and a congregation most affectionately attached to him."

He had a largeness of heart that led him to expect much from the promises of God to the church in the latter days. It was on *his* motion, I believe, that the Association at Nottingham, in the spring of 1784, agreed to set apart an hour on the evening of the first Monday in every month, for social prayer for the success of

* His views of the gospel may be seen by a small piece, first published in 1783, entitled, "The First Principles of the Oracles of God, represented in a plain and Familiar Catechism for the Use of Children." It has gone through several editions.

the gospel, and to invite Christians of other denominations to unite with them in it.

It must have been about this time that he became acquainted with *Mr. Carey*, who then resided at Hackleton. Mr. C. had been baptized by Mr. (now Dr.) Ryland, at Northampton, on the 5th of October, 1783, and, after a while, joined the church at Olney, by whom he was sent into the ministry. Without reading any thing material on Christian doctrine, besides the scripture, he had formed his own system; and which, on comparison, he found to be so near that of several of the ministers in his neighbourhood, as to lay the foundation of a close and lasting friendship between them. But to return to our deceased brother—

In all the conversations between the years 1787 and 1792, which led on to the formation of the *Baptist Missionary Society*, and in all the meetings for fasting and prayer, both before and after it was formed, he bore a part. In 1789, he republished President Edwards's *Humble Attempt to promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer, for the Revival of Religion.* How much this publication contributed to that tone of feeling, which, in the end, determined five or six individuals to venture, though with many fears and misgivings, on an undertaking of such magnitude, I cannot say; but it doubtless had a very considerable influence on it.

In April 1791, there was a double lecture at Clipstone, and both the sermons, one of which was delivered by Brother Sutcliff, bore upon the meditated mission to the heathen. His subject was *Jealousy for God*, from 1 Kings xix. 10. After public worship, Mr. Carey, perceiving the impression that the sermons had made, entreated that something might be resolved on before we parted. Nothing, however, was done, but to request Brother Carey to revise and print his *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.* The sermons also were printed at the request of those who heard them.*

* If he published any other sermons, or any thing else, besides his "Catechism," and the "Introductory Discourse at the Ordination of Mr. Morgan

From the formation of the Society in the autumn of 1792, to the day of his death, our brother's heart and hands have been in the work. On all occasions, and in every way, he was ready to assist to the utmost of his power.

In 1796, he married *Miss Jane Johnstone*, who was previously a member of his church. This connexion appears to have added much to his comfort. For eighteen years they lived together, as fellow-helpers to each other in the ways of God; and their separation has been but short. The tomb that received his remains has since been opened to receive hers. He died on the 22d of June, and she on the 3d of September following, possessing the same good hope, through grace, which supported him. A sermon was preached at her interment, by Mr. Geard of Hitchen, from Rom. v. 2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Mr. Sutcliff had been in a declining state of health for several years past. On the 3d of March, 1814, being on a visit at London, he was seized, about the middle of the night, with a violent pain across his breast and arms, attended with great difficulty of breathing. This was succeeded by a dropsy, which, in about three months, issued in his death.

Two or three times, during his affliction, I rode over to see him. The first time, he had thoughts of recovering; but whatever were his thoughts as to this, it seemed to make no difference as to his peace of mind. The last time I visited him was on my way to the annual meeting in London, on the 19th of June. Expecting to see his face no more, I said on taking leave, "I wish you, my dear brother, an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!" At this he hesitated; not as doubting his en-

of Birmingham," it has escaped my recollection. He, however, wrote several of the Circular Letters of the Northamptonshire Association; namely, that of 1779, "On Providence;" of 1786, "On the Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's-day;" of 1797, "On the Divinity of the Christian Religion;" of 1800, "On the Qualifications for Church Fellowship;" of 1803, "On the Lord's Supper;" of 1805, "On the Manner of attending to Divine Ordinances;" of 1808, "On Obedience to Positive Institutions;" and of 1813 "On Reading the Word of God."

trance into the kingdom, but as questioning whether the term *abundant* were applicable to him. "That" said he, "is more than I expect. I think I understand the connexion and import of those words—Add to your faith virtue—give diligence to make your calling and election sure—for *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly*. I think the idea is that of a ship coming into harbour with a fair gale and a full tide. If I may but reach the heavenly shore, though it be on a board or broken piece of the ship, I shall be satisfied."

The following letter received from his brother, *Mr. Daniel Sutcliff*, who was with him the last month, will furnish a more particular account of the state of his mind than I am able to give from my own knowledge.

"From the commencement of his illness, I found, by his letters,* that his mind was in general calm and peaceful. 'All,' said he, 'is in the hands of a wise and gracious God. We are the Lord's servants, and he has a right to dispose of us as he pleases, and to lay us aside at any time.' Nearly a month before his end I went to see him—to see the chamber where the good man dies.

"His mind was generally calm and happy; though, as to strong consolation, he said he had it not. When something was mentioned of what he had *done*, in promoting the cause of Christ, he replied with emotion, 'I look upon it all as nothing: I must enter heaven on the same footing as the converted thief, and shall be glad to take a seat by his side.'

"His evidences for heaven, he said, were a consciousness that he had come to Jesus; and that he felt an union of heart with him, his people, and his cause; and Jesus had said, *Where I am there shall my friends be.* The heaven that he hoped for, and which he had in no small degree anticipated, was, union and communion with Christ and his people. He said, 'The idea of being for ever separated from him, appears to me more dreadful than being plunged into non-existence, or than the greatest possible torture.'

"He often intimated that his views of divine things were far more vivid and impressive than they had ever been before. He

* They had been used to correspond in short-hand.

had a greater sense of the depravity of the human heart, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as consisting in disaffection to the character and government of God, than at any former period of his life. He had, he said, an inexpressibly greater sense of the importance of ministers having correct views of the import of the gospel-message, and of their stating and urging the same on their hearers, than he had ever had before. He was ready to think, if he could communicate his present views and feelings, they must produce a much greater effect than his preaching had ordinarily done. 'If I were able to preach again,' said he, 'I should say things which I never said before: but God has no need of me; he can raise up men to say them better than I could say them.' He would sometimes say, 'Ministers will never do much good till they begin to *pull sinners out of the fire!*'

"To Mrs. Sutcliff he said, 'My love, I commit you to Jesus. I can trust you with him. Our separation will not be long; and I think I shall often be with you. Read frequently the book of Psalms, and be much in prayer. I am sorry I have not spent more time in prayer.' At another time he said, 'I wish I had conversed more with the divine promises: I believe I should have found the advantage of it now.' Others of his expressions were, 'Flesh and heart fail.—All the powers of body and mind are going to pieces.—Shortly this prison of my clay must be dissolved and fall.—Why is his chariot so long a coming? I go to Jesus: let me go—depart in peace.—I have seen thy salvation.'

"A day or two before he died, he said, 'If any thing be said of me, let the last word be, *As I have loved you, see that ye love one another.*'

"On the 22d of June, about five in the afternoon, an alteration took place: he began to throw up blood. On perceiving this, he said, 'It is all over: this cannot be borne long.' Mr. Welsh of Newbury being present, said, 'You are prepared for the issue.' He replied, 'I think I am: go and pray for me.' About half an hour before his departure, he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—It is come—perhaps a few minutes more—heart and flesh fail—but God—That God is the strength of his people is a truth that I now see.

as I never saw it in my life.' These were the last words he could be heard to speak.

"'Life, take thy chance; but O for such an end.'"

Mr. Daniel Sutcliff adds the following lines, as having been frequently repeated in his illness:

We walk a narrow path, and rough,
And we are tired and weak;
But soon we shall have rest enough,
In those blest courts we seek.
Soon in the chariot of a cloud,
By flaming angels borne,
I shall mount up the milky way,
And back to God return.
I once have tasted Canaan's grapes,
And now I long to go
To where my Lord his vineyard keeps,
And where the clusters grow!

In saying a few things relative to his character, talents, temper, &c. I would not knowingly deviate in the smallest degree from truth. He possessed the three cardinal virtues, *integrity*, *benevolence*, and *prudence*, in no ordinary degree. To state this is proof sufficient, to every one who knew him. He was economical, for the sake of enabling himself to give to them that needed. The cause of God lay near his heart: he denied himself of many things, that he might contribute toward promoting it. It was from a willingness to instruct his younger brethren whose minds were toward the mission, that, at the request of the Society, he took several of them under his care: and in all that he has done for them and others, I am persuaded he saved nothing; but gave his time and talents for the public good.

I have heard him sigh under troubles; but never remember to have seen him weep but from joy, or from sympathy. On his reading on, hearing the communications from the East, containing accounts of the success of the gospel, the tears would flow freely from his eyes.

His talents were less splendid than useful. He had not much brilliancy of imagination, but considerable strength of mind, with a judgment greatly improved by application. It was once remarked of him, in my hearing, by a person who had known him from his youth, to this effect—'That man is an example of what may be accomplished by diligence and perseverance. When young he was no more than the rest of us; but by reading and thinking he has accumulated a stock of mental riches which few of us possess." He would not very frequently surprise us with new or original thoughts; but neither would he shock us with any thing devious from truth or good sense. Good Mr. Hall of Arnsby, having heard him soon after his coming to Olney, said familiarly to me, "Brother Sutcliff is a safe man: you never need fear that he will say or do an improper thing."

He particularly excelled in *practical judgment.* When a question of this nature came before him, he would take a comprehensive view of its bearings, and form his opinion with so much precision as seldom to have occasion to change it. His thoughts on these occasions were prompt, but he was slow in uttering them. He generally took time to turn the subject over, and to digest his answer, If he saw others too hasty for coming to a decision, he would pleasantly say, "Let us consult the town-clerk of Ephesus, and do nothing rashly." I have thought, for many years, that, among our ministers, *Abraham Booth* was the first counsellor, and *John Sutcliff* the second. His advice in conducting the mission was of great importance, and the loss of it must be seriously felt.

It has been said that his *temper* was naturally irritable, and that he with difficulty bore opposition; yet that such was the overbearing influence of religion in his heart that few were aware of it. If it were so, he must have furnished a rare example of the truth of the wise man's remark, *Better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* Whatever might have been his natural temper, it is certain that *mildness* and *patience* and *gentleness* were prominent features in his character. One of the students who was with him, said he never saw him lose his temper but once, and then he immediately retired into his study. It was observed by one of his brethren in the ministry, at an Association, that the

promise of Christ, that they who learned of him who was *meek and lowly in heart should find rest unto their souls*, was more extensively fulfilled in Mr. Sutcliff than in most Christians. He was *swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.* Thus it was that he exemplified the exhortation of the Apostle, *Giving no offence, that the ministry be not blamed.*

There was a gentleness in his *reproofs*, that distinguished them. He would rather put the question for consideration, than make a direct attack upon a principle or practice. I have heard him repeat Mr. Henry's note, on Prov. xxv. 15. with approbation: "We say, Hard words break no bones; but it seems that soft ones do." A flint may be broken on a cushion, when no impression could be made on it upon an unyielding substance. A young man, who came to be under his care, discovering a considerable portion of self-sufficiency, he gave him a book to read on *Self-knowledge.*

He is said never to have hastily formed his *friendships* and acquaintances, and, therefore, rarely had reason to repent of his connexions, while every year's continued intimacy drew them nearer to him; so that he seldom lost his friends: but his friends have lost him!

He had a great thirst for *reading*, which not only led him to accumulate one of the best libraries in this part of the country,* but to endeavour to draw his people into a habit of reading.

Allowing for a partiality common to men, his judgment of characters was generally correct. Nor was it less candid than correct: he appreciated the good, and if required to speak of the evil, it was with reluctance. His eye was a faithful index to his mind: penetrating, but benignant. His character had much of the decisive, without any thing conceited or over-bearing.

In his *person* he was above the ordinary stature, being nearly six feet high. In the earlier stages of life he was thin; but during the last twenty years he gathered flesh, though never so much as to feel it any inconvenience to him. His countenance was grave, but cheerful; and his company always interesting.

* This library is left, by his will, to the Bradford Baptist Academy, only on condition of the trustees paying one hundred pounds to his relations; a sum far short of its value.

I shall conclude with a few extracts of letters concerning him, which I have received since his decease, from those who knew him intimately.

"His zeal, for the cause of Christ," says one of his congregation, "was uniform and increasingly ardent to the end of his life. One of the last conversations that he had with me, he concluded in these words: 'Farewell! Do your utmost for the cause of Christ. I have done a little, and am ashamed that I have done no more. I have such views of its importance, that, had I ability, I would spread the gospel through the world.' His knowledge of books was very extensive; he appeared to have a facility in extracting the substance of them in a short time, as a bee extracts the honey from the expanded flower. He possessed an equal facility in knowing men, more especially ministers, and that not confined to his own denomination: so that in a few minutes he could give you an account who they were, what places they had occupied, and what was their general reputation. From this he was, many times, able to give seasonable advice."

"I believe," says a minister who had been one of his pupils, "I was the first young man placed under the care of our dear deceased father Sutcliff. From my first acquaintance with divine things, on seeing and hearing him occasionally in my native village, I formed a very high opinion of the general excellence of his character; and the intimate knowledge I had of him, from residing in his family, so far from diminishing my esteem and veneration for him, greatly increased them. His piety was not merely official and public, but personal and habitual. The spirit of devotion rested on him. He was the man of God in all his intercourse. He conducted the worship of his family with singular seriousness, ardour and constancy; never allowing any thing to interfere with it, except great indisposition. He manifested a parental tenderness and solicitude for the welfare of his pupils, and took a lively interest in their joys or sorrows. I have seen him shed the sympathizing tear over them in the hour of affliction. Such was the kindness and gentleness of his deportment, that they could freely impart their minds to him; but, while his affectionate spirit invited their confidence, the gravity of his manner, and

the commanding influence of his general character, effectually prevented any improper freedom's being taken with him. Such, too, were the sentiments with which he was regarded among his people: they loved and venerated him, He heard the sermons of his younger brethren with great candour, and, if he saw them timid and embarrassed on public occasions, would take an opportunity of speaking a kind and encouraging word to them, and aim to inspire them with a proper degree of confidence. He was singularly regular and punctual in fulfilling his engagements, whether in preaching or visiting, not only in attending, but in being there at the time; and earnestly inculcated it on his pupils, if they wished to command respect. He endeavoured to preserve and promote the order and regularity of Christian families where he visited. I never saw him out of temper but once, and that was produced by want of punctuality in another person. I often regret that I did not profit more by his instructions and example. He has many times, by his judicious counsel, 'been the guide of my youth.' His name and his memory will ever be dear to me. 'My father, my father!'"

"I have just heard," says another, who had some years since been his pupil, "of the death of Mr. Sutcliff. It has returned upon me, whether alone or in company. Such an event may well do so. In him, I saw bright lines of resemblance to our Lord and Master, such as are seldom, very seldom to be met with in poor mortals. Such amiableness of manners, so much of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, of sound judgment, and of warm affection, we seldom see united. While memory holds her place, his name and manner will be cherished by me with pleasing melancholy, not without anticipations of meeting him in another and better world."

"The memory of Mr. Sutcliff," says another, who had been his pupil, and who was present at his death, "will live in my warmest affections while I possess the powers of recollection. It seems impossible that I should ever forget such a friend, or speak of him without blessing God that I ever knew him. I am grieved that he is gone, yet grateful that he was continued with us long enough for me to receive his instructions, and witness his example.

You have heard some of his dying sentiments. As his address to me may be considered as his dying advice to the young men who were under his tuition, I communicate it, leaving it to your discretion what use to make of it. About three in the morning of the day on which he died, like Israel he strengthened himself, and sat upon his bed. Calling me to him, he, in the most affectionate manner, took hold of my hand, and expressed himself as follows: 'Preach as you will wish you had when you come to die. It is one thing to preach, and another to do it as a dying man. I am glad you are settled where you are. I think you may say, I dwell among my own people. I am glad we ever knew one another. Spiritual-unions are sweet. I have fled to Jesus: to his cross I am united. The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing!' "

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.